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ALFRED G. BAILEY	Literature and Nationalism after Confederation
F. H. ANDERSON	Plato's Aesthetics Reconsidered
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A. E. BARKER, A. S. P. WOODHOUSE, J. E. SHAW

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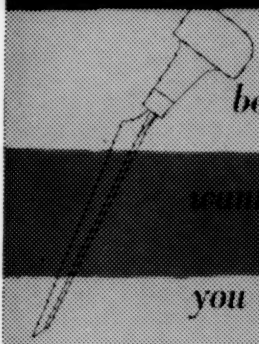

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CONTRIBUTORS

ALFRED G. BAILEY
Dean of Arts and Head of the Department of History and Anthropology, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B.; Harold Adams Innis Visiting Professor in the University of Toronto, 1955–56

F. H. ANDERSON
Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Department, University of Toronto; author of *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon* (1948)

WILFRED H. STONE
Assistant Professor of English, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.; author of *Religion and Art of William Hale White ("Mark Rutherford")* (1954)

A. E. CARTER
At present in Saudi-Arabia, following studies in French literature at the University of London and as holder of a Royal Society of Canada Fellowship

GEORGE WHALLEY
Associate Professor of English, Queen's University; author of *Poetic Process, Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson and the Asra Poems*, and a volume of verse, *No Man an Island*

C. P. CROWLEY, C.S.B.
Professor of English and Head of the Department, Assumption University of Windsor; editor of *Modern Catholic Prose and Poetry*, 2 vols. (1945)

A. E. BARKER
Professor of English and Head of the Department, Trinity College, University of Toronto; author of *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma* (1942, 1955)

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE, F.R.S.C.
Professor of English and Head of the Department, University College, University of Toronto; sometime editor of *University of Toronto Quarterly*; author of *Puritanism and Liberty* (1951)

J. E. SHAW
Formerly Professor of Italian and Spanish in the University of Toronto; author of *Guido Cavalcanti's Theory of Love: The Canzone d'Amore and Other Related Problems* (1949)

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Literature and Nationalism after Confederation

Alfred G. Bailey

If a choice had to be made of the year, more than any other, that marked a climax in the development of English-Canadian literature in the nineteenth century it would almost certainly be 1893, for it was then that five of Canada's most accomplished poets completed volumes of verse that reflected the maturing of their powers as creative artists. As we look back from the vantage-point of more than half a century upon the work of Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Scott, and Campbell, we can see that, although earlier writers had enjoyed some successes, the general level of the new work was higher than anything that had gone before. Throughout the eighties and early nineties the poets of the school of Roberts had been engaged in perfecting their craft, and with the possible exception of Scott, it is doubtful whether their work of later date ever much excelled the achievements of that climactic moment. Its significance did not entirely escape the notice of interested Canadians, although they were inclined to magnify it by making brash comparisons with what was being done across the border, where, it is true, a relative dearth had followed hard upon the brilliant expression of the New England genius. "It may not be known to Canadians generally," stated the Rev. George Bryce to the Literary Society of Manitoba College in 1894, "that we have in Canada at present a constellation of poets, with more true power, a loftier note of inspiration, and greater elegance of diction than is to be found in the United States." Three years earlier a Canadian journalist then living in Duluth, Minn., had written to the editor of a Toronto weekly: "It is a matter of pride for every true Canadian that at present much of the healthiest and most virile verse appearing in the leading magazines of this country is the product of Canadian thought and inspiration. There is truly more than promise in Roberts, Lampman, and Campbell, there is present achievement." While Mr. Laurier, when the

subject came up in the House, was not prepared to concur in Nicholas Davin's assertion that literature was the life-blood of a people, it was acknowledged that Lampman was a genuine poet, deserving of public support. It is not recorded that anything was done, and interest in the nation's culture apparently went no further than this. Poetry and politics were seldom contingent, although the writers themselves were conscious of the relevance of their work to the processes of the society that had given them birth. "This pouring out of song," wrote one of them, "is a sign and hopeful token of our national life in Canada." The poets were acknowledged to be "the outcome of a hope and belief that Canada has a destiny worthy of the confidence of her sons."

The fact of the influence on literature of the national spirit that had been born with Confederation and in its aftermath was thus clearly apprehended. The nature of that influence seems to have been imperfectly understood, even by those who were actively engaged in the attempt to produce a literature that would be worthy of the Canada to which they aspired and distinctive of its life and thought. Conceptions of social evolution that were increasingly in vogue, involving an emphasis on material causes that was characteristic of an age of realism, and mounting international economic conflict, sometimes misled them into believing that when the country reached a certain stage in its growth, a literature of merit would inevitably follow. "In point of time," wrote Graeme Mercer Adam, one-time editor of the now defunct *Canadian Monthly and National Review*, "the material progress of every country necessarily precedes the intellectual; indeed, they stand to one another somewhat in the relation of cause and effect."

While the causal relationship may be conceded, it is doubtful whether any such optimistic assumption of inevitability is warranted by the facts. Economic progress, the formation of a unified state, and a phase of rapid social differentiation were essential precedents to the growth of a national literature, but they could not ensure its occurrence. Theoretically it would have been possible for Canada to expand its territories to the Atlantic and the Pacific, and at the same time to extend its economic commitments, while remaining intellectually arrested through the exhaustion of its energies, or by diverting them to unworthy and spiritually sterile ends. It may be inferred from the evidence that both these factors operated in different degrees to check the creative impulse of the Canadian people in the period with which we are concerned. But they must be considered in relation to the opposite tendencies, simultaneously at work, the existence of which is necessary to account for

the school of romantic poetry to which reference has been made. The student in fact is confronted with what appears to be a paradox. He finds the editors and publicists who were loudest in their praise of the work of the poets, as it developed towards its peak, expressing increasingly a sense of frustration and despair as they looked about them at what was going on and counted the prospects of the future.

The truth was that a rich and varied literature of high quality had been hoped for and expected, but only the poets appeared to be fulfilling something of the promise of an earlier day. The meagre and disappointing yield seemed disproportionate to the years of social and intellectual growth that lay behind. American and British publishers testified in 1884 to the serious falling away of their exports to Canada, and local wholesale houses confirmed the fact of the decay of the better-class book trade. Mercer Adam who, as editor, publisher, journalist, and historian, gave a quarter of a century to the service of Canadian letters, found "in the ebbing out of national spirit, a growing intellectual callousness, and a deadening of interest in the things that make for the nation's higher life." The national literature, with nothing to encourage it, was fast losing the power to command attention and was perceptibly dying of inanition. "We talk with horror of political annexation," he wrote on the eve of his own departure for the United States in 1889, "yet we pay no heed to the annexation of another kind, which is drafting off across the line not only the brains and pens of the country, but the hopes and hearts of those who move and inspire them." Whistler had said that art happens, but why, asked Sara Jeannette Duncan, did it happen so seldom in Canada? The newspapers, she believed, both reflected and abetted the tastes of the people. There was no dispassionate consideration of public questions, abuse being the common substitute for reasoned argument. There were "no social topics of other than a merely local interest, no scientific, artistic, or literary discussions, no broad consideration of matters of national interest—nothing but perpetual jeering, misconstruction, and misrepresentation for party ends of matters within an almost inconceivably narrow range."[1]

Sometimes the causes of cultural backwardness seemed to be cosmic in their scope and unalterable in their incidence. They were sometimes explained as the result of an economic dispensation of an overruling Providence. The conclusion, wrote Miss Duncan, was usually that "owing to the obscure operation of some natural law" literature was not indigenous to Canada. But she herself was not prepared to accept this conclusion. As clearly as any of her contemporaries she posed the

problem that has continued to this day to baffle, perhaps more than any other, the student of literature equally with his fellow-worker in the social sciences. She was not unfamiliar with the language of Coleridge and his school. She knew that genius had been regarded as a strange and beautiful flower of the ego, put forth under all climates and conditions, irreducible to a scientific nomenclature, and defying all the wisdom of the botanists of civilization. While she did not make a clear decision, she touched on the contrary view—the view that the modern student of cultural phenomena has been most concerned to explore—in accordance with which genius was regarded as a function of the social and cultural milieu, and as a supreme expression of the processes and impulses latent within it.

II

There was little that was propitious in the British North American settlements as they took shape at the end of the War of Independence. Counter-revolutionary in sentiment as the dominant elements were, they shrank from the uncertainties of social and political experiment, and fostered attitudes that were inimical to the inquisitive and free-ranging mind. Even the Yankees, already settled in Nova Scotia before the Revolution, were unable to make much impression on the conservatism of the Loyalists; and here, as well as in Upper Canada, their diffusive influence was still in part accountable, a century later, for the strongly traditional character of the Canadian mentality. Divided from each other by the barriers of distance and terrain, it was impossible, before the building of the railways, for the scattered communities of British North America to coalesce into a large and vigorous society. The future Dominion could never have been projected by the Maritime Provinces alone, or even in alliance with the mixed population of Lower Canada. While Nova Scotia matured early, and the New Brunswick Loyalists carried over from the old colonies an intellectual tradition that flowered in the Fredericton school of poets,[2] a nationality capable of significant literary expression, founded in autonomy, and transcontinental in extent, required a numerous population of English speech and institutions, centrally located on the Upper St. Lawrence and in the southern Ontario lowland.

Events conspired to make available a territory that was essential to the purposes of the nation-builders of a later generation. Depopulated in the seventeenth century by Iroquois wars, and largely by-passed by

the French in their drive for furs, its population was drawn, at the conclusion of the Revolution, almost entirely from the illiterate communities of farmers bordering the lakes to the south. Denied intellectual pursuits and aesthetic outlets by the circumstances of their existence, they nevertheless maintained their ties with the Republic from whence they had come, posing the danger, constant and increasing, of the peaceful absorption of Upper Canada into the American Union. It was the Americans themselves with their armed invasion of the province in 1812 who started the current of social forces flowing in a different direction. Successful resistance to the Americans meant support of the Family Compact, whose members took advantage of the circumstance to consolidate their arbitrary and sometimes irresponsible power over provincial affairs, with consequences that were far-reaching. Energies that might have found expression in a progressive educational programme and a general increase in public intelligence were frustrated by the bitter political conflict that mounted in intensity as thousands of British immigrants, after 1815, entered upon the empty lands of the province, augmenting the strength of the agrarian resistance to the rigid and unyielding policies of the privileged oligarchy. Hostile to the newspaper press, which would have provided a field for the exercise of literary talents, and absorbed in the lucrative business of government, the Tories, up to the time of the Rebellions, made no contribution whatever to the beginning of an indigenous literature.[3] From their opponents might have been expected a clear and zestful prose literature of political content; but little of the kind was forthcoming, and after 1837 they were cowed and beaten or dispersed in other lands. The vast number of immigrants from overseas, who kept up the invasion of the wild lands of Canada West during the forties, possessed two disqualifications for cultural advancement on arrival in the new world and for many years to come. They did not represent an exact cross-section of the British population. Deriving preponderantly from the geographical and social fringes of the society of the British Isles, there were fewer men of learning and cultivation among them than were to be found in the metropolitan community as a whole. This disadvantage was accentuated by the terrific ordeal of coming to terms with a repellent bushland. The cultural consequences were an enforced relinquishment of many of the essentials of civilization, mental as well as physical, and a growing incomprehension of the meaning of civilization itself. This is suggested by Professor Delbert Clark to whom we are indebted for his study of

the effects of the frontier on Canadian society.[4] Deprivation of educational institutions bred eventual indifference to education. Emphasis on exploitation of material resources drew the best men away from the despised profession of schoolteaching and left the schools in the hands of the poorer element, with consequent impairment of the intellectual faculties of large numbers of the native-born, upon whose capacities and outlook the cultural life of the future Dominion would in large measure depend.

These factors were partly offset by a relatively small number of immigrants with an Old Country background of culture and gentility. Galt came too late in life and stayed too short a time to be claimed by Canada; but a number of persons, mostly Anglicans, who settled on the Upper St. Lawrence and in the Trent Valley exerted an influence on later Canadian writers. Scottish newspaper editors, steeped in the poetry of Burns, while they sometimes fed the nostalgia of the lonely exiles in the clearings, disseminated useful information, made salty comments on local affairs, and started the first imaginative currents moving in the mind of many a bereft colonial.[5] People like the Langtons and Stewarts, and particularly their neighbours, Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill, became the exemplars of how the life of the mind, even when tempered by hardship, could bring spiritual enrichment to themselves and to the life of the colony. More than any others it was the Strickland sisters, Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Traill, who promoted the literary life, both by their own writings and by their sponsorship and encouragement of others. Apart from the Maritime Provinces, where Haliburton was, at that time, developing his humorous satires, there was little of interest until the Stricklands, with their intellectual tastes already formed, entered into and leavened with their presence the new society that was then taking shape in the Canadian back country.

Mrs. Moodie helped to stir Charles Mair's interest in literature when, as a boy, he read her poems and sketches in a magazine to which his parents subscribed. How much a mentor of Lampman Mrs. Traill became may be suggested by the effect of her personality on him during his childhood at Rice Lake. Isabella Valancy Crawford spent her girlhood in the haunts of the Stricklands and it would be surprising indeed if they had not helped to impress that gifted young woman with the possibilities of a literary life. The examples are few, but they are nonetheless indicative of some reaching of minds across the emerging vista of colonial time. The age of settlement and rebellion was not entirely without promise for the future nation and its literature.

III

With the mid-century the formative period was reaching its end. The scattered settlements were becoming a community with a degree of social consistency and a sense of identity unknown at an earlier day. The process was accelerated by a limitation placed by nature upon the capacity for physical expansion. In spite of transportation difficulties, political frustrations and deadlocks, and the ever present competition of the United States, all the good arable land of Canada West had become occupied by the early fifties, and the agrarian element, which was by far the largest in the population, was hemmed in and checked in its westward movement by the great wedge of the Canadian Shield. Here was a profound difference between this country and the United States. In Canada there was no Middle West, no "valley of Democracy" in which ineluctable changes of custom, temper, and ideal, could work their way on men, imperceptibly, shaping anew. Lacking an area in any way comparable with the Mississippi basin, the Canadian tendency, noteworthy from the beginning of its history, towards consolidation, centralization, and a type of social and intellectual conservatism, was accentuated in a way that has sometimes puzzled the student of Canadian institutions. Such a tendency was further accelerated by the beginnings of the railways, the increased domination of investment capital, the consequent impetus to manufacturing, and the first tentative move towards a system of protective tariffs.

A refinement of technological skills, specialization in the professions, and other symptoms of social differentiation accompanied these changes. An expansion and an improvement in the agencies of communication were demanded by a suddenly hustling community. The newspaper press and the printing trades sprang into new life with the application of steam power to the iron presses, and other technical improvements. Publishing became a vocation and men and women, stimulated by new university foundations and an increasing demand for information, edification, and entertainment, took to the making of books. Editors and publishers, such as Mercer Adam, John Lesperance, and George Stewart, fostered authorship by providing the media for publication, by giving a lead to public taste through their literary appraisals, and on occasion by joining the ranks of the authors themselves.[6] It was such men who, during the first years of Canadian nationhood, wrote the poems, essays, short stories, novels, and reviews that raised the standards of such magazines as the *Nation*, the *Canadian Monthly*, *Belford's* and the *Week* to levels of which the Canadian of that time could well be proud.

While newspapers continued to improve in tone, with some evident exceptions, and to multiply everywhere, especially in Ontario, the magazines played a crucial role in giving focus and direction to the literary life of the country. The editor of the *Nation,* in 1875, modestly put forward Toronto's claim to be the literary capital of the Dominion; and James Douglas, of Quebec, conceded that the *Canadian Monthly* was "the best literary periodical which has yet been published in Canada. . . ." The editor of that periodical, too, felt that the changed conditions justified his venture. "The range of study," he wrote in 1872, "has grown wider and taste is becoming critical, if not fastidious. There is an evident desire to keep up with the knowledge of the time, and . . . for the latest and noblest fruits of contemporary intellect." An acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics on the part of the new university-bred generation wrought transformations in taste, and raised the quality of prose and verse to a new level. Lampman, Campbell, Roberts, and Carman, owed a debt to their classical training. Original researches in classical archaeology won acclaim at home and overseas. Through the work of Dr. McCaul, wrote the *Nation* in 1874, "Toronto may justly claim the merit of having anticipated the Mother Country in the production of a work exclusively devoted to Britanno-Roman epigraphy. . . ." The universities in the Maritime Provinces, as well as in Quebec and Ontario, tempered their devotion to the classics with a lively concern for the sciences. Important monographs in anthropology were published, and a distinguished group of geologists, through their teaching and researches, helped also to form an intellectual climate that was favourable to the growth of a national literature. William Dawson LeSueur, a native of Quebec, and a graduate of the University of Toronto in the class of 1863, was typical of the best minds of that period. Well acquainted with the ancient literatures, he wrote extensively on the major scientific, philosophical, and literary questions of the time, and always in an interesting and persuasive manner. So wide and varied were his interests that they almost epitomize the influences, British, European, and American, then current in Canada.

These varied influences, it was felt in the seventies, entered the country in such a way as to form a Canadian point of view, divergent from those of the lands from which the influences were derived. It is true that Canadian editors tended to print only those articles which they regarded as being of interest to their readers, and also that they sometimes rewrote them, giving them what they supposed to be a Canadian slant. Nevertheless it is impossible at this day to determine either the extent

of the process or its results. We know that Canadians not only adopted, selectively, ideas and emotional attitudes from abroad, but also that they were inclined to be sensitive to opinions of Canada and Canadians published in the newspapers and journals of Great Britain and the United States. It was gratifying when a London editor complimented the Toronto *Nation* on its well-written pages, the expression of ideas in clear English, and on the preservation of good manners in describing issues of public and controversial interest. It was also gratifying, when an issue of the English *Publishers' Circular* of 1873 noted the "important native literature springing up in the country. . . ." "Canada is the most vigorous of our colonies, and we are inclined to think," it stated in reference to the *Canadian Monthly*, "that this is the most vigorous of colonial literary productions and quite able to stand side by side with our home produce."

It is evident that Canada was subjected to a *mélange* of literary influences that did not come in the chronological order in which they had first appeared in the metropolitan societies from which Canadians drew the greater part of their spiritual and intellectual sustenance. Sometimes the style of the Canadian writer reflected that of a British or American contemporary, later to be replaced by another of a previous age. Sometimes the movement was the other way, or in no easily discernible order at all. Earlier in the century Byron had been an influence on Canadian poetry. Later we find an interest in Swinburne and Rossetti; and for a time it was Tennyson who, according to a journalist of the day, exercised a virtual tyranny over the style of colonial writers. Keats was the paramount influence in the eighties, on such writers as Roberts and Lampman, and there were, of course, other influences, both then and later, the determination of which would require a separate study.

Not as spectacular as the British, but nevertheless persistent, were certain American influences. Commenting on Canadian attendance at the American celebration in 1876 of the centenary of the Declaration of Independence, *Belford's Monthly* expressed the view that it would "have been the highest education of all, if our people, having seen the degree of art and other culture in the States, become dissatisfied with our present attainments . . . and seek to raise and improve them. Taking hints from our more artistic neighbours," it reassured its readers, "does not imply annexation or any diminution in attachment to home and country." Canadians, as a matter of fact, were caution personified. The *Nation*, on May 14, 1875, felt it necessary to tender advice to the youthful Toronto student-at-law, Thomas Stinson Jarvis. "Against one thing

we would venture to warn him. He seems in danger of being infected by the humour of Mark Twain—the lowest, the most forced, and the most vulgar that ever usurped the name." Unfortunately it was too often the case that such poets of the literary interregnum as Aldrich, Stedman, and Faucett, rather than the great Americans, were taken as models. Bryant was a better and a discernible influence, but Canadians were challenged most, if not influenced in equal measure, by Longfellow and Parkman, to seek in their own historic past, or more particularly in that of their French-Canadian compatriots, for themes that would lend themselves to treatment in a congenially romantic vein. The spate of histories, in which the example of Parkman's style and accuracy was not sufficiently emulated, was nevertheless a sign that Canadians were seeking to establish the lines of development of their emerging society, and to discover their own place among the nations. At that date the interest in history was still largely romantic and genealogical, a fact which goes some way to explain the relative popularity of Kirby's poem on the Loyalists, and especially his novel, *The Golden Dog*, the most impressive performance in the historic and romantic genre in the entire range of the nineteenth century. The aristocratic world of the eighteenth century was still very much in the minds of men of a certain class, and was not confined to a single nationality.

A more common influence of French Canada came in the form of the spirit of emulation with which English-Canadian writers were seized as they contemplated the achievements of Garneau, Crémazie, and other members of the Quebec School. Not often did they go so far as to become French-Canadian in sentiment, as Frances Harrison was described as doing in her work, *Crowded Out*, when she expressed what was said to be an "un-English" attitude towards pain. This rather odd example of the assimilative process would probably have accorded with the hopes of some of the nationalists that the French and the English would, in time, grow into one people.

IV

Literary influences disseminated from abroad provided some of the content and affected the emotional tone and attitude of most Canadian writing. British and American patterns of style, and ways of achieving effects desired for aesthetic ends, served as models for colonial authors. Canadian national feeling[7] augmented both the desire and the capacity to turn these traits into the elements of a native tradition. Never quite succeeding in this role of catalytic agent, it arose in the first instance a

a sense of attachment to the emerging provincial community of Canada West in the 1850's. Responsible government, vindicated in 1849, was extended into the field of religious organization by the movements of colonial autonomy in the Protestant churches in the era of Confederation. Institutional consolidation recurred in the absorption of sects into churches,[8] the later movement for university federation, and above all in Confederation itself. A growing self-consciousness stemming especially from Ontario was enlarged and intensified by the step towards transcontinental dominion taken in 1867; but the rank and file were not greatly moved by it, especially in the Maritime Provinces. It was a small group, the founders of the Canada First movement, who caught a vision of national destiny from D'Arcy McGee, and gave form to the inchoate and diffuse intimations of nationality current in some parts of the country. William Alexander Foster and the other members of the little band in Ottawa, who in the year after Confederation pledged themselves to place the good of Canada above every consideration, were not unaware, partly through the example of McGee, of the role which literature had played, and was continuing to play, in the Irish nationalist insurgence. They were all men of letters themselves in their various ways. Henry Morgan had already begun to celebrate the achievements of eminent Canadians in the first of his biographical compilations. Haliburton, the son of the author of *Sam Slick*, whose studies of African ethnology were later to win him renown, anticipated in conception and outline Macdonald's National Policy. Colonel Denison, who became a widely recognized authority on cavalry warfare, added a somewhat militant note to the movement; and Charles Mair who later alternated hair-raising adventures in the West with the authorship of the verse-drama, *Tecumseh*, had just sounded the nationalist note in his first book of poems.

Affronted by the renewal of party warfare after Confederation, the Canada First movement, given aim and direction by Goldwin Smith, ran foul of George Brown, all but became a political party under the aegis of Edward Blake, and by 1877 had dissolved into a mere aggregation of men who shared a common ideal of nationhood, rather than an organized body with coherent and practical objectives. Nevertheless it both helped to form, and facilitated the acceptance of, Sir John Macdonald's conception of a national domain of Maritime and Western lands, linked with the manufacturing centres in Ontario and Quebec by an inter-oceanic line of railway communications, and made viable by a moderate system of protective tariffs.[9]

There were many related circumstances out of which Canada First

had arisen. Its policy, and that of the Liberal-Conservative party after it, involved attitudes to the Imperial tie and to the United States which had been in process of formation throughout the century that had elapsed since the conclusion of the American Revolution. While the nationalists were pretty well agreed on repudiating any suggestion of annexation to the United States, they differed among themselves as to whether Canada should enter a system of Imperial federation, or seek an independent status in friendly association with the Mother Country. The sentimental attachment to Great Britain, and to the Queen, was constantly protested, but there was no love lost for the Queen's ministers who, it was felt, had sacrificed Canadian interests in the Treaty of Washington in 1871. Many factors, both public and personal, determined the attitude of Canadians to the question of independence. Frequent and sometimes derogatory references to Canada by English politicians and in the English press, then much influenced by Little Englandism, gave Canadians the notion that independence would be looked upon without regret by many in Great Britain. Relations with the metropolis had bred a sensitivity in Canadians which was one of the roots of their nationalism. No Canadian book, whatever its merits might be, could find sale for a single copy in England, wrote an English publisher to the author of *The Golden Dog*. Real or supposed attitudes of superiority accounted for some of it. Canadian civilians attending social functions sometimes felt put in the shade by the officers of the Imperial garrison stationed in Canada. In a novel called *Bluebell*, the wife of an officer of the 13th Hussars cast slurs on the morals as well as on the manners of Canadian women. If *Bluebell*, said the *Saturday Review*, "is to be accepted as a faithful picture of Canadian manners, the amount of romping, flirting, vulgarity, and kissing accepted as the natural order of things in the Dominion is simply surprising, and to English women must be not a little revolting."

Fortunately, it was not a representative opinion, and matters of this kind were, in any case, hardly of major importance in themselves. There were many reasons why, before very long, relations between Canada and the United Kingdom began to improve. Policies of economic nationalism and the resurgence of imperialist rivalries were responsible for the Imperial Federation movement, involving proposals for the economic integration of the Empire, and colonial contributions to Imperial defence. This movement did not of itself abate the tide of Canadian national sentiment, but it grew in popularity and influence at a time when factors of another nature were conspiring to weaken the faith of

Canadians in the future of their country. Before this happened, in the seventies, and then in the early eighties, under the stimulus of the National Policy, and because of the social and political conditions which we have been engaged in describing, a self-reliant spirit, and a confidence in their ability to succeed in great tasks, took possession of Canadians.

The hopes for something distinctive in Canadian culture, and of high quality, which had been entertained by scholars and publicists ten years before, seemed on the point of being fulfilled. The literary editor of the *Nation* had written in 1874, "One of the most gratifying features in the history of the country is the rapid growth of culture and the increasing interest in intellectual life among the people. Knowledge is descending like the first and second rain and spreading with an uninterrupted flow over the land . . . in all directions bountifully irrigating the mental soil . . . to bear fruit, we trust, ere many days." When a few years later Charles G. D. Roberts published the poems he had written while he was an undergraduate at the University of New Brunswick, he was recognized by Lampman as "the first Canadian writer in verse who united strong original genius with a high degree of culture and an acute literary judgment." These poems with their strongly pagan, earth-loving instinct, delight in the presence of life and nature for its own sake, half intellectual, half physical, touched with a passionate glow, convinced him, as he said, that Canadians were not helplessly situated on the outskirts of civilization where no art and no literature could be. The romantic stream now moved in fuller flood into a social and intellectual milieu better than ever prepared to receive it. The poets of the school of Roberts had in general a surer grasp of the technical requisites of the craft, and a larger sense of aesthetic possibilities than earlier writers had had. Predisposed by his father to the influence of Canada First, Roberts quickly became the acknowledged leader of the nationalist movement in literature which, by the late eighties, in the form of the lyric of native and classical landscape, was clearly approaching its apogee. "A Canadian literature," wrote Wilfred Chateauclair in 1888, "promising to be fine, conscious, and powerful, is budding and blossoming, book after book. . . . The nature of it shows that it is a result of Confederation. Its generation is that which has grown up under the influence of the united country." To Mercer Adam, writing in 1889, Lighthall's anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, was evidence "of a mental growth and a degree of literary culture far beyond what has been thought to be the intellectual possibility of a mere colony."

V

The momentum given by the nationalist fervour to the school of romantic poetry continued through the last decade of the nineteenth century while adverse forces were setting in, weakening the foundations of the national life, and casting the future in a doubtful light. Flaws and biases that had existed from the beginning, but which had been obscured by the phenomenal growth of the country between 1850 and 1885, became more clearly visible, especially with the execution of Riel and the renewal of conflict with the French, the resurgence of provincialism, and the prolonged and deepening depression. The early distrust of mental activity of a literary and speculative nature, contributing in no immediate way to the material advancement of provincial life, bred indifference to authorship, and restricted the market for literary productions so sharply that to live by the pen was impossible. No protection was afforded Canadian authors by the copyright laws, which allowed British and American firms to publish garbled and pirated editions of their works, for which they might never be paid. Fierce factional strife, habitual since the days before the Rebellions, continued to absorb some of the keenest minds of the country, to the ruin of their creative possibilities. Guardians of morals, sometimes self-appointed, fostered the conventional responses to time-honoured institutions. "The foreign element in the fiction of the average country-town public library," wrote an amused observer, "used to consist almost exclusively of 'Les Misérables' and 'Selections' from Balzac, with possibly a translation of 'Manon Lescaut' which had slipped in by the inadvertence of the Board of Directors," or because of their somewhat limited acquaintance with the French classics. Such boards were still "apt to be of the opinion that all foreign literary matter emanates from the devil." The treatment of breaches of the moral code in fiction was to be kept in strict conformity with colonial proprieties. "Immorality," wrote a pundit in the *Week* on October 8, 1885, "should never be allowed to prosper for more than a short time, and then its downfall should be greatly emphasized. . . . It should never be described in luxurious surroundings . . . the immoral in fiction should never be taken as a matter of course and acquiesced in as a mere foible that all at some time must give way to." Foreign realists, on the other hand, presented unrecognizable situations and complexities to the native readers, few of whom possessed the requisite sophistication and sensitivity to enable them to write in that vein.[10] Men like Robert Barr and Gilbert Parker were touched by it for a brief period, while resident abroad; and Sara Jeannette Duncan's novel, *The Imperialist*,

written years later and in another counrty, laid bare the lives of individuals warped by the crassness and venality of small-town Ontario politics. There was not much more than that.

Indifference and depression, a narrow and inhibiting morality, a political disunity that was a consequence, in part, of the fading of the vision of nationhood, these and other factors, drove journalists, novelists, and poets, to seek elsewhere what was denied them in their own country. It is hardly realized today how large was the exodus of the leading literary figures, especially to the United States, in the last decade of the century.[11] Even the names of many of those who left are hardly remembered today. So complete was the break in continuity that in the years following the First World War new Canadian writers could find no significant roots in the earlier literature of their own country. The patterns of romantic poetry, which had reached their fullest expression in the nineties, and which had continued in attenuated forms for decades afterwards, were stale and meaningless to a generation emerging from a war that seemed to have destroyed all the traditional values. It became fashionable, and it was salutary, to deride the accomplishments of the past. They had often suffered from overpraise, and, in any case, intellectual and aesthetic realities demanded a new start. The student of the history of culture in Canada must recognize the necessity for the revolt of the twenties. He cannot appreciate its significance if he does not know the tradition that was then overthrown, its objectives and its limitations, as shaped in the historic context of the time. Such knowledge is essential to the deeper understanding of the possibilities of a national culture.

NOTES

1 *The Week*, Toronto, Sept. 30, 1886, 707.

2 Alfred G. Bailey, "Creative Moments in the Culture of the Maritime Provinces," *Dalhousie Review*, Oct. 1949, 231–244.

3 John Richardson was hardly typical of the provincial Tory, although he belonged with the Tories if he belonged anywhere. For a just estimate of his place in Canadian letters, see Desmond Pacey, *Creative Writing in Canada*, Toronto, 1952, 25–28.

4 S. D. Clark, *The Social Development of Canada*, Toronto, 1942, 212–213.

5 James J. Talman, "Three Scottish Canadian Newspaper Editor Poets," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXVIII, 1947, 166–177.

6 The influence of Goldwin Smith on the growth of a national literature is so well known that I have preferred to draw attention to the names of men who

played an important part in the affairs of the time, but who are less likely to be remembered today.

7 On the beginnings of a national spirit, see A. J. M. Smith, "Colonialism and Nationalism in Canadian Poetry before Confederation," *Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association*, 1944, 74–85.

8 S. D. Clark, "Religious Organization and the Rise of the Canadian Nation," *Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association*, 1944, 87–97.

9 D. G. Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, Boston, 1944, 322, 336–353; W. Stewart Wallace, *The Growth of Canadian National Feeling*, Toronto, 1927, 59.

10 Professor Claude Bissell suggests that realism was most palatable to the Canadian reader in the form of the local colour novel. See his "Literary Taste in Central Canada during the Late Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 1950, 237–251.

11 Alexander Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions*, Toronto, 1947, 35–38.

Plato's Aesthetics Reconsidered

F. H. Anderson

Writers full of metaphysics—and sometimes void of a sense of poetry—construe Plato's philosophy as an aesthetical ontology in which beauty is made equivalent to goodness and truth. Those who elaborate cognitive theories of art quote his works with approval. Experts in criticism—innocent of the complications of philosophy—say he has no aesthetics at all, that his absorption in moral and mathematical principles renders him blind to poetic truth and lacking in concern with poetry's forms and origins. Others again contend that whatever Plato thinks worthy in the fine arts is either inconsistent with his metaphysics or rendered otiose by considerations of a Divine or Transcendental Beauty subsisting beyond human use and practice.

To give point to certain of these contentions we can do no better than quote a remark or two of F. P. Chambers in his *Cycles of Taste*. After contrasting what he calls the "anaemic Aristotelianism" of the Middle Ages with "the full-blooded aesthetics which was to mark the Renaissance," Chambers comments,

> Probably the nearest approach to a doctrine of Beauty in the Middle Ages was the Neo-Platonic treatise of Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, which achieved so extraordinary a popularity in all the learned circles of Europe. It represented Beauty as one of the Divine names, but *ipso facto* that Beauty had no more to do with aesthetic Beauty than Plato's idea of moral Beauty aforetime. . . . The Middle Ages must be recognized as an era when formal beauty in Fine Art, a self-conscious thought or act, did not exist.

While we are not concerned with the nature of mediaeval aesthetics these remarks will serve to bring into focus two of the main causes from which proceed much of the derogation of Plato's teachings on art and beauty. These are, first, the assumption that Plato's aesthetics is

dominantly ethical; and, secondly, the conviction that the beauty of which he writes is comparable to an attribute of God in a Hebraico-Christian theology and an ancillary Aristotelian metaphysics.

Let us begin with the second. Aristotle defined the object of metaphysical thinking as Being qua Being, set metaphysics apart as an independent science through its axioms, and provided no methodological relation between these and others determining the boundaries of the two bodies of knowledge which had to do respectively with nature and with art. Being was made convertible with Unity and Goodness. The three convertibles composed an order of Transcendentals removed beyond things amenable to categorical description in terms of such predicates as quantity, quality, space, time, active and passive powers, and also beyond the products of human art. Certain Christian theologians came to identify Aristotle's Being with the God made known in Revelation and joined to this Being more convertibles, including Truth and—sometimes—Beauty. Thus God's Nature and Name as Beauty became a Transcendental in segregation from such beauty as might be attributed to nature and human works. As Chambers indicates, the relating of the two beauties was not commonly undertaken by the philosophers of a philosophic age.

For Plato beauty is quite a different thing. It is not remotely comparable to a Name or an Attribute of the monotheistic God of Christian tradition. It is not enunciated in a metaphysics in which Transcendental Being as Being is set apart. Rather it is held by its author to be something common to the natures and actions of both men and gods. As an object of perception and desire it is attained by man through a love which ranges unbroken from the human to the divine. When Plato in his "myths" describes this love as the operation of the semi-divinity Eros and depicts the life of beauty as a choral ritual in which the gods do and men may, on joining this, festively behold and feed upon realities, he is not introducing discontinuity between divine things and those of nature and art but—after the fashion of his contemporaries—bringing the two into co-ordination.

The other contention in error, that Plato makes aesthetical practices subservient to ethical ends, goes back to the days when masters and scholars found it necessary to defend against the strictures of moral theologians their reading and enjoyment of "lewd" and "pagan" authors. The error has been perpetuated through the history of learning by academic persons more disposed to ethical exhortation than aesthetic reflection. The lack of aesthetical disposition among them manifests itself in an all too common refusal to construe faithfully Plato's concept

to kalon. This term they will translate by any other word than beauty, which it means, if the alternative may conceivably be put into a place which the original *to kalon* occupies. For beauty they substitute variously the "good," "fitting," "reasonable," "splendid," "worthy," "virtuous," "noble," "adequate," "satisfactory," "valuable," "perfect," or any other term which signifies in a direct or an oblique manner propriety, rectitude, adequacy, validity, moral piety. Having through equivocation stripped Plato's dominant concept of its specific meaning, they place beauty in service to a moral goodness festively arrayed in such aesthetical finery as their ethical tastes will permit.

Shying at the word beauty has, of course, more causes than one. The term has been so bandied about in silly compliment and undeserved abuse that its denotations and connotations have become blurred almost beyond recognition. So difficult is it to discover what they are, that not a few critics and aestheticians disdain its use. Things have changed since the days of Socrates when men of vigorous loins and strong stomachs were not averse to discussing in lusty speech the nature and place of beauty and its erotic love. Between their symposia and our modern promotings of beauty, as polish or refinement, circumstances have intervened to dispossess writers of what many still take to be the central concept of aesthetics, the love of beauty. Ironically enough, the reduction of what Plato professes has commonly been initiated under the patronage of his own name. There has been, for instance, the *salon* where *le beau*, purged of a strength mistaken for dross, has become delicate, and *l'amour*, having been moved from the diaphragm to the head, has become "platonic" in affront to the name which has provided the adjective. Then has followed the promotion of "spiritual" beauty among "refined" persons, without intelligent or intelligible commerce, intercourse, or communion with the object of their affections. Some people entertain the impression that this is an enlightened religion. In "realistic" protest, psychologists have reduced love to an animal phenomenon and beauty to an epiphenomenon—phenomenon's shadow. Then, of course, there have been the *noctes* of bohemians, made memorable by memoirs in protest against philistinism. These have appeared nocuous to those aestheticians who profess a whole and steady view of life. Not to be overlooked are the theatres—lecture halls and class-rooms—of the moralistic operators who all too often with clumsy implements crush the sinews of beauty's wings lest she escape their categories, outrun their areas, and take to soaring in wanton ways.

Whatever the results of such carryings-on, the fact remains that the

dramatis personae of Plato's dialogues speak much and well of music, poetry, and the erotic lover of beauty (the love of beauty in Plato *is* erotic—the erotic lover is neither a satyr nor a faded copy of a denatured man) and through what they say their author becomes the founder of a consistent and independent aesthetics. In this Plato accords beauty priority over goodness as the motive and achievement of virtuous conduct, makes the climax of cognitive desire beauty's possession, and places the power of goodness under beauty's jurisdiction.

If Plato is to be interpreted aright, three of his terms, beauty, goodness, and virtue, are not to be confused. The first and second of these he employs in consecutiveness, in contrast, and—occasionally—in marked opposition to represent quite distinct and different things. He calls the virtuous life good and also says that the virtuous man is in possession of goods; but goodness and virtue he does not equate. His logic is not so naïve as to require the identification in definition of distinct things because they are commonly found together. Plato lists many goods, the virtuous or measured life, beauty, wisdom, and, among their ancillaries, courage, temperance, friendship, health, laws, music, poetry, arts and crafts and their products. Any or all of these, along with goodness itself, may be adjudged beautiful in so far as they contribute to a symmetrically commensurate life, for beauty, says Plato, is symmetry. As for virtue: each thing, whether a pruning-hook, an ear, or a soul, has its own specific virtue when it functions well in accordance with its nature; a pruning-hook when it cuts, and an ear when it hears. The soul, which is the integration of vital functions, has virtue, does well, when it knows, loves, and acquires possessions appropriate to its nature. Moreover, the ear is in a state of pleasure, and not of pain through frustration, when it hears well; a virtuous soul, one wise and erotically effective and, therefore, in possession of beautiful and good things, is happy. Pleasure is an accomplishment of virtue, knowledge, goodness, and beauty, even if it is not of the essence of their several natures. The virtuous soul lives in full capacity, is sound, normal, in health. It is "all there" in its being, and not like the eunuch who is both a man and not a man through failure of erotic capacity. Its nature has not been emasculated or distorted but fully activated through proper education.

Education is the evoking of responses from the soul's nature to appropriate objects. Its most effective initial means Plato finds in music. This for him includes what later are called poetry, instrumental music, and the dance. Its origin, he says, is the choral dance. Young creatures,

he observes, are not only full of motions but also capable of awareness of that order in motion which is rhythm. The patterns of music, in texts, modes, and rhythms, entering deeply into the sources of human action, elicit ordered responses. In this way discipline and instruction become manners of behaviour and belief in the young; "belief" because the poets are not scientists, and their "wisdom" is not presented as a system of logically co-ordinated propositions.

Plato provides no satisfactory explanation of the source of poetic creation. He rejects a current view that poets are artists in the technical sense. It is his opinion that in their seeing and saying they soar above what can be taught by rule. Also their casting of lasting spells over their audiences evidences something more than an empirically acquired knack. Poetry remains a gift from the gods. The choral ritual from which it springs is shared by gods and men. Both are dancers. In poetry's composing and reciting there is something comparable to a magnetic communication by the muses to the poet and through him to rhapsode and audience in turn.

Because of the ready response which music evokes and the potency of its spell, Plato rejects instrumental multiplicities and modal mixtures, as well as textual and other representations which lack congruity in inner sequence—when, for instance, unmanly fear is displayed by poetic heroes, and intemperance, variability, and cruelty characterize poetic gods. Instrumental multiplicity and caprice do not instil order, nor does inconsequence lay a foundation for the reasoning which is to come later. Musical pieces in which these deficiencies appear lack internal "measure" and therefore fail to meet the requirements imposed by beauty. So far as education is concerned, considerations of beauty are to be decisive in estimating the manner of poetic saying as well as the matter of its communication. Virtue is to be taught in the most beautiful way in every regard. Is there, Plato asks, a more lovable thing to behold than the harmonious union of a beautiful disposition of soul with an outward form which manifests the stamp of beauty? An examination of music, he reflects in the *Republic*, no doubt with his *Symposium* in mind, should begin and end with the love of the beautiful.

Beauty is the recurrent theme which underlies every elaboration of Plato's thinking throughout the complexities of knowledge, desire, and virtue. Having turned from a discussion of music to list in illustration other sorts of thing, architecture, weaving, embroidery, plants, and persons, which elicit responses from the young, he makes the stipulation that the educator is to rely on such craftsmen as are able to trace out,

as in a hunt, the nature of the beautiful and graceful (or well patterned). Through acquaintance with their productions the young will be drawn without their knowing what is happening into sympathy with the beauty of reason. When reason informs them that the many beautiful particulars which they see are examples of one thing, beauty itself—the thing through which they recognize them as beautiful—they will greet her as a familiar friend. Until this recognition comes, and with it a discrimination between things which have and things which have not beauty, education remains the eliciting of habitual dispositions towards sights, sounds, and things in use within the realm of opinion. Higher education begins with the perception of persistent things which remain through recurring impressions on the senses from objects which appear, change, and disappear. Beautiful objects come and go but beauty itself, they will see, continues beyond generation and decay. When recognized as intelligibles which underlie particulars, these abiding universals are called *hypotheses* (not to be confused with modern things which bear the ancient Greek name); when regarded as objects which enter into a commensurate scheme of truth, dialectically organized without reference to particulars, they are called Forms. Knowledge, as distinct from opinion, begins with the seeing through manifold, changing particulars to unities, to beauty, goodness, justice, courage, temperance, and the like; it continues in the organizing of these into a symmetrical scheme of life under beauty's dominance.

Beauty as the object both of wisdom and of desire imposes on her pursuer an arduous quest, nothing less than the ascent of a difficult scale of perception and an upward journey made hazardous by a headstrong and unruly steed. Plato exposes this scale of perception by drawing a distinction between many beautifuls and many goods on the one hand and the Forms of beauty and goodness on the other. The former, he says, lie in the region of opinion, the latter in knowledge. In representation of the types of perception encountered in these two regions he takes a perpendicular line and divides it into two parts; these parts he again divides into two segments each, making four segments in all. To the two that are lower he assigns opinion and to the upper two knowledge. The lowest of the four segments represents elementary sense-perception of "images," such as sights and sounds and reflections of things on polished surfaces and smooth water. In the next higher segment, the second stage of opinion, is to be found the perception in "faith" unto use of particular things whose natures are not as yet discerned in understanding. The third segment of the divided line

represents the perception of meanings, the seeing through particulars to underlying universals, *hypotheses*. For example, in the science of geometry the particular triangle or square drawn on a flat surface is perceived as an example of triangularity or squareness, even indeed if the particular available to sense is not made with full accuracy according to definition. In the fourth stage of perception, the last segment of the line, the universals are cognized as Forms, as intelligibles without reference to any specific particulars, as the constituents of a commensurate scheme. This scheme is perceived by dialectic. With the recognition of *hypotheses* the percipient passes from the diffuse and undefined multiplicity of sense-impressions to an area of definable entities; through his dialectical knowledge of Forms he enters a realm of unity within a variety of intelligibles—one of symmetry or beauty. Beyond the realm of dialectic, according to Plato's statement in the *Republic*, stands the Form of the good, the cause of both being and being known. Of the nature of this Form as cause Plato gives but little account. He says in the *Republic* that it partakes of beauty in superlative degree and is knowable not directly but by analogy (*analogia*). In a later dialogue, the *Philebus*, the good is said to take refuge in the region of beauty.

Perception at every stage has its objective counterpart; as activity it is the correlative functioning of a faculty or power in the subject with an appropriate object; always "like knows like." The objective correlate of sense consists of "images"; of "faith" in use, particulars; of the agent of perception which discerns meanings, *hypotheses*; of dialectical knowing, Forms. To the causal Form of the good no specific correlative faculty in the subject is assigned. It can be known only by analogy.

Considerations of poetry and complementary means to early education have led to the dividing of perception into four parts. To which of these four, then, is poetry to be assigned? Plato answers, to the lowest, that of "images." What the poet communicates cannot be employed as particular matters of fact. One cannot rest one's body on a poetic bed, nor defend oneself against an assailant with a poetic spear. Unlike the scientist, the poet does not present logically defined universals, nor does he, like the dialectician, undertake to organize Forms in a logically commensurate scheme. His compositions present imitative "images." Such permanence as he gives to fleeting objects is mimetic depiction. Even as particulars are "imitations" of Forms, so is poetry an "imitation" of particulars which too lie within the region of opinion.

In this manner Plato provides an epistemological resolution of the

"ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry." Having done so, he invites the poets to provide a rebuttal. As a matter of history, the answer in poetry's defence was first given, not by the poets themselves, but by Aristotle and the school of Isocrates. These persons either rejected or disregarded Plato's account of knowledge. Aristotle accorded poetry the status of an art, conjoining it closely with rhetoric, in his classification of the sciences. Isocrates and his successors made the manner of composing written and verbal pieces, and not the soundness of their matter, the end of the professed art of rhetoric. The poets became the allies of rhetors in the enterprise of captivating audiences. Whereas Plato had only determined the educational offices of poetry, the new critics both defined its doubtful purposes and laid down technical rules for its proper composition, in disregard of Plato's warning that the rhetorical approach to literary statement could lead to the misrepresentation of truth. The rhetoricians' *confrères* in criticism were to provide directions in matters of taste for Romans who filled their houses and their streets with *objets d'art*—but not their heads with philosophical aesthetics—after sacking Greek temples and shrines and finding themselves in possession of "beautiful" handiworks whose religious and socially commemorative functions escaped them. It is not improbable that the conceptions of "fine art" and "art for art's sake" came into Western consciousness through the naïveté of these Roman collectors and amassers. Certainly poetry was turned into a "delight" and any marble column or bust into a thing of beauty. In succeeding days when men more austere than lavish Romans called the tune, poetry was to be dismissed as a bawd and harlot.

The disparity between dialectic and poetry within his epistemological scheme does not diminish in Plato's mind his stress on the basic role of poetry in education. He maintains until the end that music and philosophy together are the creators and preservers of human virtue. While he leaves music in the realm of sense he also affirms that of all Forms beauty is the one which most clearly manifests itself to this faculty. In his *Timaeus*, the dialogue in which the logico-mathematical aspect of his thinking is most prominent, Plato is insistent that rhythm, sight, hearing, speech, and music are given man as means whereby he may overcome his lack of grace and bring into order, akin to the movements of the commensurate cosmos, his own vagaries. If Plato restricts higher education, as preparation for dialectical reasoning, to arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, astronomy, and the mathematical aspects of music, he also finds in number the clue to that *measure* which not only

links sensibility with intelligibility but dominates every beautiful action and product from poetry, through the crafts, arts, and sciences, to the virtuous life and the composition of the cosmos. At the end of his search he identifies beauty, the reality which confers more benefits on man than aught else, with measure and "commeasure" (or symmetry).

Plato has recognized an ancient quarrel between the poets and the philosophers, but he entertains no conflict either between beauty and truth or between beauty and virtue. The virtuous man for him is the effective lover of truth and of beauty as well. The motivation of the soul is amorous. To the depiction of amorous desire Plato devotes two dialogues, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. The concept he employs in describing this is *eros* (the Latin *amor*), and not *philia* (the Latin *amicitia* and the English "friendship").

In the *Symposium* Eros is described as a daemon, not a god and yet not a mere mortal but a spirit intermediate between the two. The human soul whose desire he represents has the possibility of sharing in a divine life. Eros is said to be the offspring of Penury and Resource. Like his mother he is in a state of privation and as the son of his father he is eager and enterprising. The erotic lover in the very act of desire has begun to overcome the disparity between what he is and what he may be. The objective of Eros is the possession of the beautiful: all men have love for what is beautiful in some degree; they think beautiful what they love—this can be a beautiful soul within a less well favoured body. Desire is not merely a condition of emptiness or of unrest but includes the recognition of something desired. The perceived and loved evoke latent capacities in the perceiver and lover. Love includes the yearning for begetting and perpetuation. The impulse to produce permanent things and thus to achieve a kind of deathlessness is everywhere manifest among organisms. Animals have young and men leave after them the progeny of poems, laws, and political institutions. Human love is a quest. It begins with an affection for one beautiful body and then passes into a search for physical beauty as such. After this follows susceptiveness in the presence of beautiful souls, thoughts, institutions, and laws, and the intimacy of the contemplation of a great ocean of beautiful things. Then suddenly, as in an initiation into a mystery, comes the perception of beauty itself, absolute, timeless, selfsame, perfect. Through the espousal of and identification with this beauty, which exists beyond change and decay, the human seeker possesses in issue such immortality as he may attain. Whereas in the *Republic* the good is left as a lonely object without a specific correlative subject, something to

be known indirectly through analogy, in the *Symposium* beauty's pursuer and his beloved are said to be one in marital intimacy.

The *Symposium* treats love as erotic impulse; the *Phaedrus* depicts it as a kind of inspired madness. The mad lover, like Eros, is in a state of unrest and yearning for the satisfaction of his desire. His condition is one of struggle, for not all the parts of his nature are on easy terms with the others. When his reason discerns what is really beautiful and desires its pursuit an unruly wanton part seeks intercourse with its own kind. To speak in a figure, each soul contains a charioteer (reason) and two winged steeds. In human souls one of the horses (the spirited element) is responsive to direction, the other (appetite) is a headstrong and fractious fellow. The gods, who also have souls, are subject to no internal conflict; their charioteers and horses are one in purpose. Together they compose a choral procession to which any soul is welcome, for there is no jealousy among members of the divine choir. The gods in festal procession ascend with ease in order and strength to the apex of the vault of heaven; reaching its outer periphery they behold things unavailable to sense and opinion, things of which no poet has ever sung, the Forms themselves. These are the appropriate objects of their cognition and the proper nurture of their intelligences.

Human souls find their going difficult. Those of their number whose charioteers control their steeds most capably soar above the domain of opinion and, before returning, catch glimpses of the things which lie beyond. The others, either through the failure of the charioteers or the unruliness of headstrong, plunging steeds, manage in confusion and great disorder to reach far lesser heights, and then fall back with wings severely broken in the *mêlée*. No further attempt at an ascent can be made until new wings are grown, for it is the function of their wings to carry souls aloft. Souls which have seen most on their journey become true lovers, philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom, lovers of beauty, truly "musical" persons. Strictly speaking no soul which has failed to see something of Forms can appear in human shape, because it is distinctive of man to perceive the manifold particulars of sense as examples of one intelligible. Knowledge, in accordance with our "myth," may be regarded as the recollection of what the soul has already seen of real being. It is this *re*cognition which nourishes the human soul and makes its wings to grow. The soul which has become a philosopher is enabled to soar in erotic madness or inspiration and join in the life of the gods so far as humans may. To the elevation of souls beauty of all the Forms contributes most. It reveals itself most strikingly through impressions

on the senses and while the most readily discernible of all realities is also the most lovable.

Several topics remain for consideration, measure, pleasure, the raising of aesthetic practice to spontaneous play, *mimesis* as imitation, as well as the question whether Plato in his later dialogues, when he discusses the nature and place of measure, discards in part at least the earlier epistemological scheme of the *Republic*. Space permits only a summary account of measure.

Measure, according to Plato, is that human acquisition which has rendered the sciences exact; increased the effectiveness of the arts and crafts; brought within explanation language, music, definition, health, and virtue; made intelligible the structure of the cosmos; and given beauty its supremacy over all valuable things. Those who talk cleverly about measurement, says Plato, fail to distinguish two sorts, one extrinsic and the other intrinsic to the object under view. In the former, calculation proceeds according to relative lengths, breadths, velocities, and the like; in the latter, according to the mean, the fitting, the right proportion, what is proper in circumstance. The second sort may be regarded as the result of introducing "limit" into what would otherwise be "infinite" or indeterminate. Take the case of "sound": this by itself is meaningless—less than noise, which has some degree of determinate character—until there is brought into it the "limit" of vowel, consonant, syllable, word, and so on, when it becomes verbally significant; or again, until there is brought into it mode, tone, interval, and rhythm, when it acquires musical meaning. The same holds true of space which becomes specific in character through the introduction of line, angle, and triangle. Meaning and significance—order and design as well—wherever found, are the results of definition, that is, of the introduction of the "finite," literally, into what would otherwise be a meaningless "infinite" in multiplicity or extent. In this procedure four "concauses" are involved, the "infinite" (or limitless, indefinite, undefined), the "finite" (or limit), the "mixture" of the two, and reason. Definition, the agent of measure, is to be found everywhere. Oral and written speech, the fitting word, the proper pitch, and the inevitable rhythm are the results of bringing internal measure into sound. The physical cosmos, according to some thinkers at least, came into existence through the merging of determining geometric patterns with indeterminate matter. In medicine the practitioner's concern is with the restoring of measured balance or proper mean to disproportionate activities of parts or elements within the body. The task of the educator

is the provision of a commensurate life among the soul's faculties or powers. The artist in politics designs a city-state in which all persons contribute proportionately to the whole according to their respective capacities. The office of artists and craftsmen is the combining of materials or ingredients in lengths, breadths, textures, and all other respects in amount and degree appropriate to the natures of the products intended. The doctor calculates the correct dose and does not prescribe too much good medicine; the garment-maker cuts his good cloth in appropriate lengths; the musician tunes his strings to proper pitch, neither too high nor too low. In the production of any beautiful thing, be this a garment or health or music, or virtue, there must never be too much or too little of any good thing. As calculation goes, the architect has an advantage over the weaver, the pilot, the musician, the physician, for his measuring can be more exact than theirs, yet all of them have their places under the rule of measure. Even the architect's building is not composed of "divine" spheres, lines, and circles, things defined in an absolute way, but with imperfect materials and human tools.

Suppose then, in conclusion, we ask the philosopher, as the surveyor of existence, what things are to be most esteemed, what for him are of greatest worth. His answer is, first, measure with which symmetry or beauty is to be immediately conjoined. Then he names, in turn, reason and wisdom, sciences and arts and true opinions, and adds pleasures unmixed with pain. "The power of goodness," he observes, "has now taken refuge [*katapefeugen*] in the nature of beauty." Significantly the sciences, including dialectic, which in the *Republic* precede the analogous comprehension of the Form of the good, have also been brought within beauty's jurisdiction.

Hale White and George Eliot

Wilfred H. Stone

High among the great Victorians who have profited from the investigations of twentieth-century scholars is George Eliot. Thanks largely to the work of Professor Gordon S. Haight, in publishing John Chapman's *Diaries* for 1851 and 1860 and editing George Eliot's *Letters*, we have for the first time since the appearance of Cross's *Life* the materials for a major reassessment of her life and work. Cross, the loving husband and censor, bowdlerized her letters and tailored his comments to show us a deeply moralistic, intellectually over-freighted woman. In leaving this impression he was not, of course, entirely mistaken; but recent scholarship has allowed us a less partial view of her early years, when she was simply Marian Evans and had neither earned nor felt the need of a pseudonym. Although this new light does not quite reveal the intellectual sibyl of the Cross legend emerging as a nymph, it does permit us to see her as a flesh-and-blood woman whose charms were sufficient to attract the passionate devotion of men and to arouse the hostility and jealousy of other women. We are now reminded that she dwelt for many years in the suburbs of Bohemia, and that the fascination she exerted on such men as Dr. Brabant, John Chapman, and Herbert Spencer—as well as Cross and Lewes—was not solely intellectual.

But there were some who protested against Cross's estimate at the time the book first appeared, who raised small voices on behalf of a George Eliot Cross never knew or chose not to remember. One of these critics was William Hale White ("Mark Rutherford"), a man uniquely equipped to submit a revised estimate. Before either he or Marian Evans had acquired pseudonyms, they were, between 1852 and 1853, associates in John Chapman's publishing house and boarders in his establishment at 142 Strand. During that brief span of time she touched his life in several memorable ways. In George Eliot's *Letters* or in Cross's

Life we get no mention whatever of Hale White's name, and there is small doubt that he did not figure large in her busy life. But the written records of her shy worshipper are filled with memories and praise. He had initially been attracted by qualities quite alien to those advertised by Cross:

> As I had the honour of living in the same house, 142, Strand, with George Eliot for about two years, between 1851 and 1854,[2] I may perhaps be allowed to correct an impression which Mr. Cross's book may possibly produce on its readers. To put it very briefly, I think he has made her too "respectable." She was really one of the most sceptical, unusual creatures I ever knew, and it was this side of her character which to me was the most attractive. . . . I can see her now, with her hair over her shoulders, the easy chair half sideways to the fire, her feet over the arms, and a proof in her hands, in that dark room at the back of No. 142, and I confess I hardly recognize her in the pages of Mr. Cross's—on many accounts—most interesting volumes.[1]

Though our concern here is with Hale White's record of this association, we cannot adequately appreciate it without some reminder of the nature of Chapman's establishment. 142 Strand was at once Chapman's home, a boarding house, and a publishing office. The stream of guests and callers was constant, and throughout the 1850's Chapman—with the aid of his over-worked wife and his housekeeper, Elisabeth Tilley—served as host to nearly all the liberal thinkers and writers of that generation. George Henry Lewes, James Anthony Froude, John Stuart Mill, James and Harriet Martineau, Theodore Parker, Herbert Spencer, Carlyle, Emerson, and possibly Karl Marx were just a few of the more prominent people who crossed his threshold, shared his dinners, or appeared at his regular "Wednesday evenings." Many of his guests were writers for the Benthamite *Westminster Review*, which Chapman edited, or were authors of books published under Chapman's imprint in his famous "Catholic" series, but they were all unorthodox, liberal, or heretical. Chapman provided, without a question, the most important clearing house for opinions of this sort in mid-century England, and 142 Strand was probably the only gathering place in London where heterodoxy would be so warmly welcomed.

The unorthodoxy of Chapman's personal life provided an appropriate setting for such liberalism. It was at his urging that George Eliot translated Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* in 1854, but Chapman had translated some of Feuerbach's theories about the marital relation into action before this—with perhaps a touch of Byron's thrown in. Elisabeth Tilley served not only as governess of the establishment but also as Chapman's mistress, and so long as this *ménage à trois* was not

threatened by outside competition it worked out surprisingly well. But the addition of Marian Evans as a boarder created a major crisis in the household. The two ladies, wife and governess, suspected Chapman's motives and, on one occasion, combined forces to send Miss Evans packing. Miss Evans' part in all this is obscure, but Chapman's *Diary* for 1851 records an occasion when she burst into tears upon suspecting that Chapman's devotion was inspired more by her talents as a compiler of his *Analytical Catalogue* than by her appeal as a woman.

It was into such an establishment that Hale White came in October 1852. If he was aware of Chapman's philandering habits, he did not choose to record the fact very explicitly:

> He had "liberal" notions about the relationship between the sexes. Not that he was a libertine, but he disbelieved in marriage, excepting for so long as husband and wife are a necessity to one another. If one should find the other uninteresting, or somebody else more interesting, he thought there ought to be a separation.[3]

Had Hale White known how Chapman joined practice with preachment, he would doubtless have been deeply shocked. But even without this knowledge, there was plenty in the intellectual life at Chapman's to disturb him. Though he was himself an apostate from orthodoxy, he was also morbidly shy and introspective—and emotionally ill-equipped to live comfortably in the open spaces of such emancipation. The old creed was dead for him, but he felt lost and miserable without it. In a letter to his father, written shortly after his arrival, his fears and dissatisfaction are clearly expressed:

> With all that you say I most cordially agree, most especially with what you say about *cold negativism*. Mr. Chapman is nothing so much of a negation merely as many of his books are, but I see, and must see infinitely more of this heartliness [*sic*] emptiness both in books and men than I ever saw before, and this drives me back again to all my old eternal friends who appear more than ever perfect, and Jesus above them all.[4]

The same sense of spiritual alienation is reflected in the account of his first interview with Chapman, when he was applying for work.

> As the New College council had tested my orthodoxy, so Chapman tested my heresy and found that I was fit for the propagandist work in No. 142 and for its society. He asked me if I believed in miracles. I said "Yes and no." I did not believe that an actual Curtius leaped into the gulf in the Forum and saved Rome, but I did believe in the spiritual truth set forth in the legend. This reply was allowed to pass, although my scepticism would have been more satisfactory and more useful if it had been a little more thorough.[5]

But if much left him cold at Chapman's, Marian Evans assuredly did not. Here was warmth and light. If we can believe the account Hale White gives in his "fictional" books, he became, after only a brief association, "entirely overcome with unhesitating absorbing love for her."[6] Can we take these words at their face value? Or is this simply a rudderless young man's expression of gratitude for a woman's kind attentions? These questions present us a problem in the evaluation of evidence. In Hale White's work we find two kinds of writing: the articles and memoirs signed with his true name (the "objective" account), and those quasi-autobiographical works signed "Mark Rutherford" (the "fictional" account). The material of greatest interest is found in the "fictional" account, for there, behind the mask of "Mark Rutherford," he is much more intimate and self-revealing. *Hale White*'s writing is notable for its objectivity, restraint, and businesslike faithfulness to bare fact. But *Mark Rutherford* reveals a man of consuming passions and acute emotional sensitivity. If I can convince my readers that the "fictional" account may, in all major aspects, be accepted as true, that the stories and the *Autobiography* can be depended upon as valid sources of biographical detail, then we shall have the materials for an important chapter in Hale White's life and an interesting footnote to George Eliot's.[7]

Before letting the facts more or less speak for themselves, however, I feel that they should be prefaced by a few items of external evidence. Hale White once remarked to his second wife that "he never *created* a character in his life, never sat down to write without having somebody before his mind's eye."[8] This remark is particularly applicable to his first books, the *Autobiography* and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance,* but a close study of his other work indicates that Hale White, in nearly all of his fiction, was a literal transcriber of his personal experience. He would alter names, scramble chronology and genealogy, or contrive a clumsy plot, but the *people* animating his pages are with hardly an exception modelled after real people he had known, and the very incidents in which they appear are seldom entirely invented.[9]

Let us take, as a first example, the "fictional" account of Hale White's interview with Chapman as it is recorded in the *Autobiography* (pp. 141–2) and compare it with the "objective" account already quoted. In the novel Chapman appears as "Wollaston" and Marian Evans as "Theresa," but otherwise their identity is unmistakable. Even the wording is, in some places, a close paraphrase.

To him I . . . went, and . . . I was received, if not with a cordiality, at least with an interest which suprised me. . . . [A]fter hearing patiently what I

wanted, he asked me somewhat abruptly what I thought of the miracles in the Bible. . . . I explained to him that I did not suppose the miracles actually happened as they are recorded, but that, generally speaking, the miracle is a very intense statement of a divine truth. . . . He seemed content, although hardly to comprehend, and the result was that he asked me if I would help him in his business.

In the objective account too we learn that Hale White's duties at Chapman's—after a short time on the *Westminster* itself—were "To write Chapman's letters, to keep his accounts, and, most disagreeable, to 'subscribe' his publications" (*Early Life*, p. 83). In the *Autobiography* (p. 143) his duties under Wollaston are virtually the same: "I was to sell his books, keep his accounts, read proofs, run errands, and, in short, do just what he did himself." Just how "disagreeable" he found the "subscribing" aspect of the work is eloquently substantiated in the *Autobiography*, and gives rise to a major dramatic episode which we shall view later.

Hale White's description of his first meeting with George Eliot in "George Eliot as I Knew Her" is also unmistakably shadowed forth again, with amplification, in the fiction. In the objective account he writes:

I remember vividly the day on which I came to No. 142, and had lunch there. Miss Evans sat opposite to me. I was a mere youth, a stranger, awkward and shy. She was then almost unknown to the world, but I had sense enough to discern she was a remarkable creature. I was grateful to her because she replied even with eagerness to a trifling remark I happened to make, and gave it some importance. That was always her way.[10]

That "trifling remark" and the degree to which Marian Evans ministered to Hale White's almost pathological lack of self-confidence are dilated upon in the fictional account. Mark Rutherford met Theresa at lunch after his first morning's work at Wollaston's (*Autobiography*, pp. 143–4). "She had a way," he writes, ". . . of sitting back in her chair at table and looking straight at the person with whom she was talking." This conversational habit was at first disconcerting to Mark Rutherford, who had not been accustomed to women who could assume an intellectual equality with men. But although Theresa contradicted him in the following exchange, the fact that she heeded his remark at all was enough to make this shy youth deeply grateful.

Her uncle [Wollaston's fictional relation to Theresa] happened to know some popular preacher whom I knew [possibly Frederick Denison Maurice], and I said that I wondered so many people went to hear him, for I believed him to be a hypocrite, and hypocrisy was one of the easiest of crimes to discover. Theresa, who had hitherto been silent, and was reclining in her usual atti-

tude, instantly broke out with an emphasis and directness which quite startled me.

"The easiest to discover, do you think, Mr. Rutherford; I think it is the most difficult, at least for ordinary persons; and when they do discover it, I believe they like it, especially if it is successful. They like the sanction it gives to their own hypocrisy. . . ."

There were other conversations following this, and they all serve to emphasize George Eliot's charm and liveliness as a conversationalist and to bring further fictional amplification to the statements made in the *Athenaeum* letter about her "respectability." In this letter, and indeed in all these sources, Hale White identifies himself with the unconventional, *avant garde* George Eliot and becomes her defender in this role. It is no secret to the reader of the Mark Rutherford books that his sympathies always lay with those heroines who, scorning social proprieties, yet maintained in their freedom a high degree of moral integrity. Very likely George Eliot inspired this emphasis and, possibly, modelled for more than one of these portraits. One is reminded of Pauline in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* (1887) and especially of Miss Leroy in the *Deliverance* (1885), who "told a male person once, and told him to his face, that if she loved him and he loved her, and they agreed to sign one another's foreheads with a cross as a ceremony, it would be as good to her as marriage" (p. 34). To such disciples of Feuerbach, the term "respectable" could be almost an insult.

The objective and fictional accounts also agree in the descriptions of her appearance. Hale White regarded her as "attractive personally" (*Last Pages*, p. 132), and he remembered with special vividness her hair and eyes. In "George Eliot as I Knew Her" he writes (*ibid.*): "Her hair was particularly beautiful, and in her grey eyes there was a curiously shifting light, generally soft and tender, but convertible into the keenest flash." Theresa is described in more detail, but the same characteristics are emphasized (*Autobiography*, pp. 143–4): "She had yellowish hair which was naturally waved, a big arched head, greyish blue eyes . . . and a mouth which, although it had curves in it, was compressed and indicative of great force of character."

Once again, both accounts emphasize Miss Evans' and Theresa's interest in music, and both draw attention to the fact that one night at Chapman's she played especially for our author. Chapman records that on the day of her arrival he went with her to buy a piano and later listened to her play "Mosart."[11] In "George Eliot as I Knew Her" (*Last Pages*, pp. 133–4), Hale White remembers similar pleasures:

She delighted in music, and played Beethoven, one evening, as I shall never forget, to me alone. She was not, I suppose, a first-rate performer, but she more than satisfied me, and I was, I am afraid, a little incoherent in my thanks.

The same detail is served up again in the *Autobiography* (pp. 148–9):

She was fond of music, and occasionally I asked her to play to me. She had a great contempt for bungling, and not being a professional player, she never would try a piece in my presence of which she was not perfectly master. She particularly liked to play Mozart, and on my asking her once to play a piece of Beethoven, she turned round upon me and said: "You like Beethoven best. I knew you would. He encourages a luxurious revelling in the incomprehensible and indefinably sublime. He is not good for you."

Once in later life Hale White confessed to lacking any real interest in art and to wanting an ear for music—though he feigned such interests.[12] But we hardly need that knowledge to detect here a greater interest in the performer than the performance.

Two other matters deserving emphasis are reflected in both the objective and fictional accounts: Hale White's deep regret that he let his association with George Eliot lapse after leaving Chapman's, and his refusal to accept her invitation to the theatre on a night when the famous French actress, Rachel,[13] was playing. The intense and repeated emphasis these matters receive in Hale White's writing lead us to suspect that—at least in his self-image—he longed to occupy a more intimate place in George Eliot's affections. In the objective account he writes (*Early Life*, pp. 83–4):

It is a lasting sorrow to me that I allowed my friendship with her to drop, and that after I left Chapman I never called on her. She was then unknown, except to a few friends, but I did know what she was worth. . . . She took the kindest notice of me, an awkward creature not accustomed to society. It is sad that youth should be so confident in its own resources that it will not close its hand upon treasure that is placed inside it. It was not only George Eliot by whom I neglected to profit. I might have seen Rachel. I recollect the evening, and I believe I was offered a ticket. It was not worth while to walk a couple of hundred yards to enrich myself forever!

It is of special interest to note that if he was offered a ticket it was probably through the kind offices of George Henry Lewes, who was then doing dramatic reviews for the *Leader*, and who, since at least March 1853,[14] had won warm favour in the eyes of Marian Evans. If the ticket came from this source, it might have had a good deal to do with Hale White's refusal. These suppositions begin to have more plausibility when we view the fictional account. In the sketch, "Confessions of a

Self-Tormentor" we are presented (*More Pages*, pp. 117–20) with a "Mrs. A" who in appearance and character is, without a question, Marian Evans. Not only did Mrs. A invite the "I" of the story to see Rachel, but he refused because of jealousy of another companion whom she had also asked to go along:

> Mrs. A. took much notice of me, and her attitude towards me was singular. She was not quite old enough to be motherly to me, but she was too old for restrictions on her intercourse with me, and her wide experience and wisdom well qualified her to be my directress. Often when I went to her house nobody was there, and she would talk to me with freedom on all sorts of subjects. I did not fall in love with her, but she was still attractive as a woman, and difference of sex, delightful manners, subtle intellect, expressive grey eyes, and lovely black hair streaked with white, might have taught me much which I could have learned from no ordinary friend. My cousin often went with me to Mrs. A.'s, but I was never at rest when he was there. . . . Mrs. A. was too well behaved to encourage conversation in my cousin's presence which disclosed my inferiority to him, but without premeditation it sometimes turned where I could not follow. . . . She understood something of modern Greek, and she and my cousin one evening fell to comparing it with ancient Greek. I sat sulky and dumb. At last she turned to me and asked me smilingly why I was so quiet. I replied that I did not understand a word of what they were saying (which was untrue) and that if they would talk about Stamps and Taxes I could join. She divined in an instant what was the matter with me, and diverted the discussion so that it might be within my reach. . . . Her sweet temper, however, could not be disturbed, and she announced that she was going to see Rachel, the great actress, and invited us both to accompany her. I refused on the ground that I knew nothing of French (also untrue). She assured me that if I would read the play beforehand I should be in no difficulty. I was really touched by her kindness, but the devil in me would not let me yield. I missed the opportunity of seeing Rachel, just as I missed many other opportunities of more importance. Oh! when I look back now over my life and call to mind what I might have had simply for taking and did not take, my heart is like to break.

Later in this same sketch "I" attributes his failure to accept Mrs. A's overtures of friendship and kindness to a "Demon of Pure Malignity" in himself, which perversely led him to reject what he most desired. But this Demon, in the present instance at least, might well have been the little green-eyed monster itself, and the cousin, in real life, none other than George Henry Lewes. One aspect of Hale White's insecurity was his need to be solely and exclusively loved, and another was his incapacity to involve himself in competitive situations—especially where a woman was concerned. Like most introverts, he was fiercely possessive, but he lacked the confidence to face a rival gracefully.

This is not to claim that Hale White wanted to marry George Eliot. But that the fictional account is extremely close to actual fact seems indisputable; and if this is so it seems equally indisputable that Hale White, in his own peculiar way, was in love with her. That there was a strange ambivalence in his feelings goes without saying—perhaps his statement that she was not old enough to be "motherly" to him suggests what he most desired. But the joining of these two accounts provides persuasive evidence that George Eliot was for him considerably more than a mere literary enthusiasm. "The curse for me," he writes in his fictional "Confessions" (*More Pages*, p. 120), "has not been plucking forbidden fruit, but the refusal of divine fruit offered me by heavenly angels." In writing these words he had Mrs. A. clearly in mind.

Once in his life, however, Hale White made a gesture in the direction of renewing contact with George Eliot. One of the few lifelong friends remaining from his Chapman experience was William Maccall, whom he described in his article on Chapman as "that strangely gifted and wayward man of genius."[15] This man appears in the "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor" in the following passage (*More Pages*, pp. 121–2), which again provides evidence linking Mrs. A. with George Eliot:

> Some years afterwards I wrote to her [Mrs. A.] asking her if she could get work for a starving man whom she had known in older days, and she helped him to obtain it. Two years after she had done this kind office, and had shown she had not forgotten me, she died. . . .

We know from unpublished letters among Hale White's literary remains that he had in fact written to George Eliot—not two but four years before her death—asking her to assist Maccall in his penury. Carlyle wrote of Maccall that "there never was a man who went about with any dignity on so little money."[16] His eccentric gospel of individualism attracted few disciples and brought in fewer material returns. But in applying on his behalf to George Eliot, Hale White was rewarded with only the meagre satisfaction of a reply from Lewes. The good deed was accomplished, but one suspects that this was the excuse and not the primary motive in the correspondence.

The Priory. North Bank. Regent's Park.[17]
Tuesday [August 29, 1876?]

DEAR SIR

Mrs. Lewes is so much occupied just now that I relieve her from all correspondence that is not exclusively personal. She writes me to say that she perfectly well remembers you & she hopes I may be successful in my application to a publisher on Mr. Maccall's behalf. I shall endeavour to see one

in the next two or three days & see if any translation is to be had. Should you not hear further from me you will conclude that I have not been successful.

Yours truly
G. H. LEWES

W. Hale White Esq.

On Wednesday (August 30, 1876?) another letter was received from Lewes in which he said: "I saw Mers. [*sic*] Chapman & Hall today & spoke of Mr Maccall as a translator. . . ." Then, less than a week later, a further letter was received:

The Priory—5th Sept '76

MY DEAR SIR

On our return home we find the very acceptable present you have sent Mrs. Lewes, with the graceful letter which preceded it. She is much touched at your having thought of gratifying her by the portrait of her old favorite; and although I am glad to hear that Mr. Maccall has had work placed in his hands, I cannot recognize in my own slight share in that business anything more than a simple duty of comradeship to a fellow worker, not at all deserving of the generous acknowledgment you made.

Very truly yours
G. H. LEWES

These letters provide the only concrete evidence that George Eliot remembered Hale White, but they are equally important by way of suggesting that Hale White tried to recapture a lost opportunity which was to him a deep regret. What the portrait was we do not know, but among mutually shared "old favorites" were Rousseau, Spinoza, Bunyan, and Thomas à Kempis. In 1879 Hale White opened a correspondence with Browning by the device of sending him a portrait of Bunyan, and it is possible that he made the same gift to George Eliot.[18] But whatever the likeness was, there can be little doubt that it was presented in the hope that George Eliot might also remember Hale White among her "old favorites."

In the "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor," however, Mrs. A. (George Eliot) is credited with assisting the "starving man," whereas we know from these letters that it was the work of Lewes. Why this alteration was made is not hard to guess: not only did Hale White want to honour George Eliot, but he most certainly did not want to praise Lewes. He scarcely mentions Lewes in any of his writing, and when he does it is not warmly. We should hardly be surprised that the man who won the permanent attentions of George Eliot should not stand high in Hale White's regard.

But in letters and conversation throughout his life Hale White repeatedly mentioned George Eliot in deeply affectionate terms. In one conversation he refers to her as a "sweet, gentle creature" and adds, "I could worship that woman."[19] Again, after paying a visit to Mrs. Charles Lewes, the widow of George Eliot's stepson, on June 18, 1898, he wrote to a correspondent saying: "[I] am glad to find that my love for her after so long an absence from her is unchanged."[20] But a second letter to another friend is perhaps more revealing in this regard:

> I went to see Mrs. Lewes a little while ago, sat at the desk where George Eliot wrote her books, and read many of her letters (unpublished) to her step-children, delightfully affectionate and even playful, but the light that lay upon them was uniformly toned and reduced to a kind of sunset tint, such as that I now see upon the grassy hill opposite to me. They were very pathetic to me, and, reviving my old passion for the woman, they made me begin to read her all over again. I shall go on till I have finished her, provided that I can get through, but occasionally I desist and doubt if it is good to persevere. So much of her became familiar to me under conditions long past, and I am threatened with a resurrection of what is better buried. I am glad to find that my feeling towards her has lost none of its intensity, and that, as a whole, what I thought of her five-and-thirty years ago is what I think of her now.[21]

Just what *did* he think of her five-and-thirty years earlier? An important addition to the information already offered is one further incident recounted in the *Autobiography*. If we can now read this incident feeling some confidence in its validity as true history, it can tell us much.

In describing his work at Chapman's, Hale White dilates at considerable length on his feelings of inadequacy and insufficiency. Above all, as we have learned, he hated the "subscribing" aspect of the work, which involved going the rounds of the London booksellers and asking them how many copies of a Chapman publication they would be willing to take. Many of the booksellers were, in his eyes, a "rough set," and the young man wilted before this competitive situation. He became nervous and, in psychological terms, "accident-prone." A major crisis of his early career was occasioned by his subscribing a set of Chapman's books "thirteen as twelve" when his orders were to sell them "twenty-five as twenty-four" (this simply meant that the buyer of twenty-four books got one free). But hard on the heels of this blunder followed one more serious, which raised his nervous anxiety and self-contempt to a near breaking point. The incident is thus detailed in the *Autobiography* (pp. 155–6):

> She [Theresa] took the manuscript and I took the proof. She read about a page, and then she suddenly stopped. "O Mr. Rutherford," she said, "what

have you done? I heard my uncle distinctly tell you to mark on the manuscript, when it went to the printer, that it was to be printed in demy octavo, and you have marked it twelvemo." I had had little sleep that night . . . and suddenly the room seemed to fade from me and I fainted. When I came to myself, I found that Theresa had not sought for any help; she had done all that ought to be done. She had unfastened my collar and had sponged my face with cold water. The first thing I saw as I gradually recovered myself, was her eyes looking steadily at me as she stood over me, and I felt her hand upon my head. When she was sure I was coming to myself, she held off and sat down in her chair. I was a little hysterical, and after the fit was over I broke loose. With a storm of tears, I laid open all my heart. I told her how nothing I had ever attempted had ever succeeded . . . that now I found I was useless . . . and that the meanest clerk in the city would serve them better than I did. I was beside myself, and I threw myself on my knees, burying my face in Theresa's lap and sobbing convulsively. She did not repel me, but she gently passed her fingers through my hair. Oh the transport of that touch! It was as if water had been poured on a burnt hand, or some miraculous Messiah had soothed the delirium of a fever-stricken sufferer. . . . She gently lifted me up, and as I rose I saw her eyes too were wet. "My poor friend," she said, "I cannot talk to you now. You are not strong enough, and for that matter nor am I, but let me say this to you, that you are altogether mistaken about yourself. The meanest clerk in the city could not take your place here." There was just a slight emphasis I thought upon the word "here."

The incident closes with Theresa herself correcting and paying for the mistake. But of greatest interest is the sequel to this episode.

The next day, when he went back to work, Mark Rutherford tells us (*Autobiography*, p. 157), "I worshipped Theresa, and was entirely overcome with unhesitating absorbing love for her." On one level, of course, these words might be taken simply as a hysterical young man's gratitude for some maternal or sisterly attentions. But what complicates this easy solution is the fact that, in the *Autobiography*, Mark Rutherford was at the same time in love with another woman with whom he *was* contemplating marriage, and that his love for Theresa was in obvious and open conflict with this other love. He writes (pp. 157–8):

> After a time, the thought of Mary recurred to me. I was distressed to find that, in the very height of my love for Theresa, my love for Mary continued unabated. Had it been otherwise, had my affection for Mary grown dim, I should not have been so much perplexed, but it did not. It may be ignominious to confess it, but so it was; I simply record the fact.

Now this "Mary" in the *Autobiography* is almost certainly patterned after Miss Harriet Arthur, the girl to whom Hale White became engaged and subsequently married. Hale White's second son, John, declared in his reminiscences of his father: "The fact is that if he drew any character from her [his first wife] it was that of Mary Mardon . . . who is one of

his most sympathetic creations."[22] And the records bear out the fact that he was courting her during the very years he was at Chapman's. These facts strongly indicate, therefore, that the love Mark Rutherford bore for Theresa was that of a man for a woman and not simply that of a worshipper before a literary idol or that of a grateful boy for a benefactress. Nor is it hard to understand why he would feel it "ignominious" to confess this ambivalence. For the woman Hale White *did* marry was still alive when he penned these words.

The fact that in the book Mark Rutherford actually married neither Theresa nor Mary should not disturb this evidence very much. Mary's sudden death is as obviously contrived as Theresa's subsequent emigration to America. In disposing of his characters, Hale While made free use of the *Deus ex machina.* But granting the real identity of these quasi-fictional characters, why, we might ask, did he want to get rid of Mary at all? This question takes us into matters of Hale White's domestic life that we can only touch on here. But it is perhaps sufficient to say that Mary's death might have represented, in some sense, a wish-fulfilment. Through thirty-five years of his married life, Hale White's wife was, literally, slowly dying of an incurable disease, and the prostrating weight of that cross is grimly registered throughout his writing. Again and again he finds correlatives for his personal predicament in fictional portraits of embittered husbands whose wives are incapable of sharing their partners' intellectual interests. "Why did I marry that woman? I do not know, excepting that I was seized and driven, as if by a wave breaking on the shore."[23] Such regrets are a constant refrain in his books, and the fictional solution is more often than not the death of the offending party and, to the man, the luxury of a second chance. The frustration behind these studies of incompatibility was, of course, as much sexual as intellectual, and it was unquestionably a reflection—at least in part—of Hale White's own involuntary monasticism. But the pattern is nearly always the same: the man makes the mistake of marrying the "available" woman instead of the ideal; he rationalizes his discontent by complaining of her intellectual shortcomings; through her convenient death he is granted the reprieve which permits him to marry his George Eliot. If this reasoning is correct, it seems warrantable to assume that the death of Mary was engineered to get her creator out of what, in retrospect, he might easily have felt to be a compromising situation; and emotionally to prepare himself for a consummation which, though impossible in fact, was nonetheless painfully dreamed about through a tortured lifetime.

Near the end of "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor" Hale White describes his feelings at Mrs. A's funeral, which is quite obviously that of

George Eliot. That he was actually in attendance is doubtful, but that it was an event of moving importance to him there can be no question. He writes (*More Pages*, pp. 121–2):

> When the coffin was lowered into the grave I wept many tears. I had been guilty of a neglect which was wicked injustice, and I could never hear her say she had forgiven me. I understood the meaning of atonement, and why it has been felt in all ages that, by itself, reformation is insufficient. I attempted an expiation, which I need not describe. It is painful, but the sacrifice which I trust I shall offer to the end of my days brings me a measure of relief.

What is the meaning of this strange statement? Why did he refer to his "neglect" of her as "wicked injustice," when, as we have seen, she seemed hardly aware of his "neglect" or, indeed, of his existence? What "wrong" had he done her that he felt demanded an "expiation"? A likely answer is that Hale White, like many others, rejected George Eliot for her irregular alliance with Lewes and later came to regret his hasty moral judgment. But this cannot be the whole answer. His words are too strong, too weighted with a heavy burden of remorse and guilt, to be satisfactorily explained by this solution alone. Doubtless he had judged her harshly, but doubtless too he did not call on her for the same reasons he refused to see Rachel with her—jealousy of a rival, fear of the social impotence bred by his inhibited passion, anxiety lest his love for her show itself as moody hostility. These things and the deep psychological causes underlying them were, we suspect, as much involved in his "expiation" as any simple atonement for a simple wrong. For these were the impediments that had deprived him of one of the main chances of his life; these, one might say, made up the "original" sin. Had he not suffered from them, perhaps George Eliot would never have so attracted him in the first place. But taken as he was, he was doomed to love and not to love, to live an ardent dream-life and use it as the merciless standard to judge the drab quality of his real achievements.

In viewing this relationship, we have seen more of Hale White than of George Eliot, but the ardours of a disciple can tell us something about the master. And in this reflected light, George Eliot appears not only as a potent intellect and moral force but, in a curiously English and Puritan way, as a *femme fatale*. As the years passed, she doubtless came to exist for Hale White more as a symbol than as a woman, but it was a symbol that worked in subtle ways to goad his marital discontent and to serve as a perpetual reminder of many things he might have had and been.

NOTES

1 Letter to the *Athenaeum*, Nov. 28, 1885.

2 Actually he was there from about October 1852, until February 1854. George Eliot was there from September 29, 1851, until October 1853, although her association with the *Westminster Review* continued beyond this date.

3 *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (Oxford, 1936), p. 146.

4 Unpublished letter dated May 3, 1853. Copy in "Private Notes" by Sir William Hale White, the author's eldest son.

5 *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford (By Himself)* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 82–83.

6 *Autobiography*, p. 157. Hale White's complaints of "cold negativism" came shortly after Marian Evans began her association with George Henry Lewes. The loss of her company may have had something to do with his feelings.

7 The "objective" record is found in the following sources: "George Eliot as I Knew Her," London *Bookman* (Aug. 1902); "Dr. John Chapman," *Athenaeum* (Dec. 9, 1894); some unpublished letters; letter to the *Athenaeum* (Nov. 28, 1885); some of his journalistic writing; *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford*; *The Groombridge Diary* (Oxford, 1924), a book of records and memories by Mrs. D. V. White. The "fictional" accounts are found in: *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*; and "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor" in *More Pages from a Journal* (Oxford, 1910).

8 *The Groombridge Diary*, p. 66.

9 See Wilfred Stone, *Religion and Art of William Hale White* ("*Mark Rutherford*") (Stanford, 1954), pp. 127–64.

10 *Last Pages from a Journal* (Oxford, 1915), pp. 131–2.

11 G. S. Haight, *George Eliot and John Chapman* (Yale University Press, 1940), p. 18.

12 *More Pages from a Journal*, pp. 114–115.

13 See G. S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters* (Yale University Press, 1954), II, 104, June 17, 1853.

14 See Haight, *Letters*, II, 94.

15 "Dr. John Chapman," *Athenaeum* (Dec. 8, 1894), 790.

16 David A. Wilson, *Carlyle at his Zenith* (London, 1927), p. 67.

17 This and the following letters are in the possession of Mrs. Dorothy V. White of Sherborne, Dorset. They will be included in the later volumes of Professor Haight's edition of George Eliot's *Letters*.

18 See my "Browning and 'Mark Rutherford,'" *Review of English Studies*, IV (July 1953), 251. In conversations with Browning the subject of George Eliot was prominent.

19 *The Groombridge Diary*, p. 72.

20 *Letters to Three Friends* (Oxford, 1924), p. 87.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 180–81. Letter dated July 3, 1898.

22 John Hale-White, "William Hale White, 'Mark Rutherford,' 1831–1913: Notes by his Second Son" (Geneva, 1931); private typescript, in possession of Dr. R. Hale-White of London.

23 "The Love of Woman," *Last Pages*, p. 98.

The Cult of Artificiality

A. E. Carter

Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt, minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea, quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent, important.—CAESAR, *Comm.*, I,1.

Amongst occidental legends, there is one which crops up with peculiar insistency, filling pages in writers as dissimilar as Caesar and Tacitus, Montaigne, Montesquieu and Rousseau.* It is something more than a legend, indeed; it is a platitude and a generalization, one of those generalizations without which Western thought seems unable to function. It even has its hero, tilling his farm or hunting his meat in virgin forests: the Noble Savage, ignorant of wine, precious metals, commerce, the arts, philosophy, and, in fact, everything which is usually called "civilization": a creature entirely primitive, whose virtues result from his very primitivism. The idea is so ingrained and fundamental that it goes back to the very roots of our culture: both Greek and Hebrew theology presuppose a primitive state, Arcadia or Eden, the loss of which explains all human woe: civilized man, though at times so proud of his civilization, has never been able to rid himself of the sneaking fear that it is all somehow unnatural, artificial, and corrupt. Whether because of obscure atavistic forces which call him back to the seas and jungles from which he emerged, or a sheer spirit of contradiction, he dislikes what he builds. Or rather, what he builds makes him uneasy.

When Rousseau began to publish, Western Europe, and especially France, was ripe for a rebirth of primitivism, and for a lyric passion for Nature. Romanticism adopted both. Both speedily became almost Romantic conventions, and when Romanticism declined, both declined with it. We can trace the beginnings of that decline from the last years

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of the eighteenth century itself: the Marquis de Sade, that underground source of so many later ideas, struck at the very heart of the matter within a few years of Rousseau's death. Attacks on Rousseau's nature-cult occur several times in his books; two are particularly interesting, for they show how the reaction against the natural led to an interest in sexual abnormalities. A character in *Justine*, Almani, declares that far from being a benevolent force as a certain "modern philosopher" (Rousseau) maintains, Nature is really destructive and anti-human, and should be detested on that account. A little further on, a certain Madame d'Esterval says that her dearest ambition is to "outrage Nature" in every way possible; and both she and Almani conclude that the best means to this end is the practice of sexual perversions.[1] The abnormal thus becomes a proof of man's superiority to natural law, an "artificiality" which, while more lurid than face-paint or dyed hair, is of the same order.

This is the main idea behind the cult of artificiality, and most subsequent developments can be traced back to it. Succeeding writers did little more than paint De Sade's monstrous lily, sometimes with direct reference to the Marquis. One of the first of them was Théophile Gautier.

The circumstances of Gautier's life played some part in the matter. His career as a critic obliged him to live in the theatres and streets of Paris, sipping absinthe in cafés or watching plays and ballets evolve amidst the trembling unreality of silk and cardboard.[2] Hence he developed a prejudice in favour of the artificial as opposed to the natural. As early as 1883 he formulated the idea in phrases which were to echo throughout the rest of the century.

> Je n'ai vu la mer que dans les marines de Vernet; je ne connais d'autres montagnes que Montmartre. Je n'ai jamais vu se lever le soleil. . . . Je suis un Parisien complet. . . . Les arbres des Tuileries et des boulevards sont mes forêts; la Seine, mon Océan. . . . Je ne trouve pas le soleil de beaucoup supérieur au gaz. . . . Je déteste la campagne: toujours des arbres, de la terre, du gazon! . . . C'est ennuyeux à crever.[3]

These ideas appear again in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1834), whose hero, D'Albert, is constantly proclaiming his preference of art to nature and of sophisticated to unadorned beauty. His taste in women does not run to the milk-maid, but to the woman of fashion, with a silk gown and pearls in her hair.[4] The hero of *Fortunio* (1837) leads a completely artificial existence, shut up in a windowless house with a glass-roofed courtyard filled with tropical plants. A sprinkler system supplies rain;

and to spare Fortunio the boredom of travel, there are dioramas of the Swiss Alps, the Bay of Naples, and so on.

One aspect of this artificiality is important: it is identified with modernism—inevitably, of course, since it was the progress of nineteenth-century science that made Fortunio's exploits possible. And when eleven years later Gautier advised young painters to seek subjects and inspiration in contemporary life rather than in the past, he just as inevitably represented modern civilization by man-made, artificial symbols ". . . Nous acceptons la civilization telle qu'elle est, avec ses chemins de fer . . . ses machines, ses tuyaux de cheminée. . . . Le monde antique peut être balancé par un monde nouveau tout resplendissant d'acier et de gaz, aussi beau dans son activité que l'autre dans sa rêverie sereine."[5] Railways, machinery, and factory chimneys became an integral part of the decadent city-scape thenceforth.

While Gautier thus identified the modern with the artificial, however, he did not push matters to the point of calling the artificial decadent. A fusion of the three terms did not occur in his mind until he had read Baudelaire; and it was Baudelaire, in fact, who first made the fusion.

Owing to his immense posthumous glory, it is somewhat difficult to realize Baudelaire's contributions to the cult of artificiality and to the decadent movement as a whole. We see him nowadays as the great tragic poet of modern civilization, in legitimate descent from Dante and Milton. His modernism especially has contributed to this: he sought consciously to give modern man, in his frock coat and stove-pipe hat, something of the moral grandeur which, owing largely to Romantic exoticism, was too often reserved for ancient or mediaeval man. This effort is summed up in his *Salons* of 1845, 1846, and 1859, where he calls it *l'héroisme de la vie moderne*; he notes that Balzac's heroes are more interesting than those of the *Iliad*, and praises the engraver Méryon for etching the factory chimneys, heavy skies, and massed buildings of Paris. The *Petits Poèmes en prose* and *Les Fleurs du Mal* are nearly all given contemporary settings, a technique Baudelaire used more and more as time passed. The section entitled "Tableaux parisiens" was added to *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1861; and of its eighteen poems, only eight had appeared in the first edition four years before.

Without doubt this "heroic" side of Baudelaire is the most important. But it is only one side; it is the peak of his genius, and to reach it we have to struggle through a wide tract of marshy ground. Like Gautier, Baudelaire used the artificial and the modern as synonymous terms. The

best illustration occurs in his essay on Constantin Guys, whom he called *le peintre de la vie moderne*. He was particularly struck by Guys' interest in dress and cosmetics. He devotes a whole chapter of the essay to this point, the *Eloge du maquillage*. Baudelaire fully understood how this artificiality contradicted Rousseau's naturism; and, like the Marquis de Sade advocating sexual perversions, he begins his apology for cosmetics by attacking Rousseau's idea that Nature is the "base, source et type de tout bien et de tout beau possibles," concluding that everything natural in man is bad, and that whatever is good is artificial and acquired—from virtue to face-paint.[6] The suggestion throughout is that a painter of modern life is of necessity a painter of artificial beauty—the highly stylized elegance of the dandies and courtesans who trifled away their afternoons on the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne.

The idea is carried a step further in the *Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe* (1857). A critic of the period, Pontmartin, had dubbed Poe decadent, and Baudelaire felt obliged to defend the American against the charge. But in doing so, he all but admitted its truth: he compares Poe's Muse, not to some rustic matron, "répugnante de santé et de vertu, *ne devant rien qu'à la simple nature*" (the italics are in the text), but to a highly painted and sophisticated woman, the embodiment, he says, of a decadent period.[7] The passage may have been intended as a joke; it was probably modelled on the tastes of Gautier's D'Albert. But it gave the initial idea full development. Even more important (the circumstance is a good example of mutual influence) it furnished Gautier, who quotes it, with a portrait of Baudelaire's "ideal woman." Gautier elaborated the conceit profusely in his *Notice* to the 1868 edition of the *Fleurs du Mal*, and his elaboration is almost certainly the source of all the painted harridans who crowd the novels and poems of the next forty years.[8] The reader of the *Notes nouvelles* and the essay on Guys is left with the impression that the poet of modern life and the painter of modern life are the artists of an artificial and decadent period. And, if we are to judge from a few samples of Baudelaire's letters and conversations that have come down to us, this was precisely the impression he wished to give. In writing to a friend who had asked him for some nature-poetry, he said that he disliked the sea, only swam in a bath-tub, and preferred a music-box to a nightingale. He liked to cultivate a reputation for this type of anti-naturism amongst his friends. "Je raffole des dames qui se maquillent," he told Adrien Marx. "Pour moi, la femme n'est belle qu'avec du kohl aux yeux, du fard au visage,

et du rouge aux lèvres."[9] And again: "Je voudrais les prairies teintes en rouge, les rivières jaune d'or et les arbres peints en bleu. La Nature n'a pas d'imagination."[10] This reminds one of Gautier's preface to *Les Jeune-France*, written when Baudelaire was twelve.

The spiritual and metaphysical aspects of artificiality were investigated by Baudelaire in his two treatises on drugs, *Du vin et du haschisch* (1851) and *Les Paradis artificiels* (1860). The cult of artificiality is essentially a voluntary effort on man's part to alter and improve nature, and this point emerges several times in what Baudelaire says of alcohol, hashish, and opium. Their use arises from the human animal's passion for infinity: for infinite joy, ecstasy, infinite multiplication of the ego. It is above all voluntary: wines are the liquids by which man procures *à volonté* courage and gaiety; wine and hashish together are artificial means by which man turns himself into a sort of god. In some ways, this development of the metaphysical aspects of the cult is Baudelaire's most important contribution to the theory. It assigns to will and intellect a paramount role in transforming the natural. How close the idea lay to Baudelaire's heart is revealed in *La Fanfarlo* (1847), one of his earliest works. The hero of the story, Samuel Cramer, succeeds in winning Mlle Fanfarlo, a dancer, as his mistress; but mere possession is not enough (again the influence of D'Albert is possible): she must receive him dressed as Columbine, one of her roles, and (the point is stressed) highly rouged. "N'oubliez pas la rouge!" he cries. "Ce trait caractéristique," adds Baudelaire, "ne m'a nullement étonné. . . . [Cramer] aimera toujours le rouge et la céruse, le chrysocale et les oripeaux de toute sorte. Il repeindrait volontiers les arbres et le ciel." Cramer's artificiality is said to reveal his "imagination dépravée," and explains why his love affairs were more intellectual than sensuous.[11]

Baudelaire thus identified modernism with artificiality and both with decadence. Throughout his work he showed a tendency to present the modern in its most excessive, not to say degenerate, aspects; it must be admitted that if, as he claimed, his themes illustrate modern heroism, it is sometimes a rather doubtful sort of heroism. The fact that he chose criminals and prostitutes as examples of it in the *Salon* of 1846 is characteristic; both appear frequently throughout the prose-poems and *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Other items include a variety of perversions from sadism to necrophilia; and since all are presented in an urban setting, usually itself sufficiently lurid (boudoir, brothel, gambling-den), the identification of civilization—the artificial—with decadence is as complete as any disciple of Jean-Jacques could desire.

It is an identification the nineteenth century was quick to make, from 1857 on. Sainte-Beuve (the comparison became famous at once) called *Les Fleurs du Mal* a marquetry gazebo, where debauches of drugs took place. Other critics regretted that the book had nothing of the space and time exoticism of Romantic poetry.[12] The very title, "flowers of evil," was a convenient excuse for purple passages: it contributed in no small measure to the interest in hot-houses and monstrous flora which characterizes so much writing during the rest of the century. Edouard Thierry[13] compared the book to a conservatory of poisonous plants, "une serre de vitrage," containing "toutes les écumes, toutes les lies, toutes les perles verdâtres de la corruption végétale." Barbey d'Aurevilly said that Baudelaire's talent was "une fleur du mal venue dans les serreschaudes d'un Décadence," the expression of a dying age, and later referred to the poet, with italics, as "un Héliogabale *artificiel*."[14] Gautier compared the poet's muse to the alchemist's daughter in Hawthorne's story, living in a garden of venomous exotics, "plantes aux feuillages bizarrement découpés, d'un vert noir ou minéralement glauque, comme si le sulfate de cuivre les teignait."[15]

Gautier's taste for artificiality reached full expression in passages like these. He insisted on these aspects of Baudelaire's work because they flattered his own interests. He may have realized that they were in part the result of his influence. Baudelaire, for that matter, may have told him so: they knew each other well. The *Notice* to the first posthumous edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* is designed to show Baudelaire as a poet of the artificial, the decadent, and the modern: all three terms used nearly synonymously. The idea returns like a theme. "Il convient de citer comme note particulière du poète le sentiment de *l'artificiel*. Par ce mot, il faut entendre une création due tout entière à l'art, et d'où la nature est complètement absente." — "Le poète . . . aimait . . . le style de décadence . . . l'idiome nécessaire et fatal des peuples et des civilisations où la vie factice a remplacé la vie naturelle." — "Il se plaisait dans cette espèce de beau composite et parfois un peu factice qu'élaborent les civilisations très avancées et très corrompues." He develops the sketch Baudelaire had made of Poe's Muse, and describes woman as Baudelaire preferred her, plastered with cosmetics, drenched in scent, her hair dyed, seated before a toilet-table covered with tweezers, brushes, lotions, etc. "Tout ce qui éloignait l'homme et surtout la femme de l'état de nature lui paraissait une invention heureuse. Ces goûts peu primitifs . . . doivent se comprendre chez un poète de *décadence* auteur des *Fleurs du mal*." He adds that Baudelaire liked Guys'

work because it was entirely unclassical and was profoundly imbued with modern corruption.

This fusion of modernism, decadence, and artificiality is much more conclusive than Baudelaire's: Gautier points out in the *Notice* that artificiality, producing something entirely different from classical beauty, was for Baudelaire a sign of "la volonté humaine corrigeant à son gré les formes et les couleurs fournies par la matière." And he adds a remark of great significance: "La *dépravation*, c'est-à-dire l'écart du type normal, est impossible à la bête, fatalement conduite par l'instinct immuable. C'est par la même raison que les poètes *inspirés*, n'ayant pas la conscience et la direction de leur œuvre, lui causaient une sorte d'aversion, et qu'il voulait introduire l'art et le travail même dans l'originalité." It is easy to see what conclusions could be drawn from this. Baudelaire liked depravity, which is a necessary part of decadence, a final refinement of artificiality, since it is essentially anti-natural. The influence of the Marquis de Sade is obvious. Even painstaking craftsmanship becomes a variety of perversion. To complete the picture, Gautier points out that the setting of most of Baudelaire's verse is the decadent capital, which he calls "ce dédale infect . . . cet immonde fourmillement de misère, de laideur et de perversités."

This sense of modern corruption was fairly common during the fifties and sixties. Even a serious philosopher like Taine saw modern civilization in the same light as Gautier, and used nearly the same terms to describe it. In his essay on La Fontaine (1853), he compared Paris to the decadent capitals of antiquity, Alexandria and Rome, "un terreau puissant, étrangement composé de substances brûlantes, capables de produire des fruits extraordinaires, maladifs souvent, enivrants parfois."[16] Five years later, writing on Balzac, he called the *Comédie humaine* a typical product of the corrupt city. The passage reads very much like a prose version of Baudelaire's *Crépuscule du soir*:

> Le gaz s'allume, le boulevard s'emplit, les théâtres regorgent, la foule veut jouir; partout ou la bouche, l'oreille, les yeux soupçonnent un plaisir, elle se rue; plaisir raffiné, artificiel, sorte de cuisine malsaine faite pour exciter, non pour nourrir, offerte par le calcul et la débauche à la satiété et à la corruption. . . . Tout cela bout ensemble et . . . pénètre tous les nerfs d'un plaisir maladif et vénéneux.[17]

Balzac's novels are flowers of evil produced by this hot-house:

> Voilà ses alentours et sa vie: vous prévoyez quelles plantes ont dû pousser sur ce terreau artificiel et concentré de substances âcres. Il en fallait un

pareil pour faire végéter cette forêt énorme, pour y empourprer les fleurs de ce sombre éclat métallique, pour y emplir les fruits de ce suc mordant et trop fort.

If "Balzac" were changed to "Baudelaire," the paragraph would read like an article by Thierry, Gautier, or Barbey d'Aurevilly on *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

A passion for the artificial, symbolizing decadence and presented in an urban setting, becomes characteristic of most writing after the middle sixties. This passion explains the Parisian background of much of Verlaine's verse, and the constant references to rouge throughout the poetry of the time. Mallarmé calls his heart "un pot de fard gisant au pied d'un mur" (*L'Azur*), and in *Tristesse d'été* tells his mistress "je goûterai le fard pleuré par tes paupières." The characters of his *Hérodiade* and *Igitur* live in curtained boudoirs; the Hérodiade, like La Fanfarlo, appears at her toilet-table. Paris began to attract writers as formerly they had been attracted by "maisons du berger" or by Spain and the Orient. Baudelaire and Taine spent long evenings in theatres, casinos, and music-halls, and so did the Goncourt brothers. Descriptions of such haunts are frequent throughout their *Journal*. The following sketch of prostitutes at the Casino Cadet shows a morbid delight in vice and depravity which is highly characteristic of the period, and, indeed, of the rest of the century:

> Ces femmes enfarinées de poudre de riz, blanches comme un mal blanc, les lèvres peintes en rouge au pinceau, ces femmes maquillées d'un teint de morte . . . l'œil charbonné, avivé de fièvre, avec des cheveux, pareils à un morceau d'astrakan . . . ces femmes avec leurs figures de folles et de malades, semblent des spectres et des bêtes de plaisir . . . se faisant tentantes . . . par un renversement de nature parlant à des appétits d'amour viciés.[18]

Most of the other writers of the Naturalist school were fascinated by this identification of civilization (artificiality) with depravity. The link between Gautier's formula and Naturalism is supplied not only by the Goncourts but by Huysmans in the preface he wrote for Théodore Hannon's *Rimes de joie* in 1879.[19] Hannon's verse, of slight poetic value, is a hymn to cosmetics. It reads (as Huysmans points out) like a verse rendering of Baudelaire's *Eloge du maquillage*. One of the longest poems, *Maquillage*, is typical of the rest. The poet's mistress is described painting her face:

> Sachant mon dégoût libertin
> Pour tout ce que le sang jeune éclaire
> De son hématine—un matin
> Tu te maquillas, pour me plaire.

De l'inflexible azur du ciel
Irrémédiablement ennemie,
Mon âme, tu le sais, ma mie,
N'aime que l'artificiel.

A list of her lotions and paints follows. Huysmans began by comparing Hannon to Baudelaire and ended by comparing him to Zola. The *Rimes de joie*, he says, is the only book since *Les Fleurs du Mal* "qui se soit attaqué aux grâces maladives de la femme, aux névroses élégantes des grandes villes. Par là, les *Rimes de joie* se rattachent . . . au grand mouvement du naturalisme." It is typical of the anti-classical nature of the cult of artificiality (a point first made clear by Gautier and Baudelaire) that Huysmans should go on to declare the neurotic, over-dressed women of Hannon superior to the "bovine" goddesses of Greek art. Typical also of the tendency to confound artificiality, modernism, and decadence is the fact that he should find in the work of Baudelaire and Hannon the beginnings of the Naturalist school's interest in neurosis and disease. Hannon, he says, has "un goût de terroir flamand, compliqué d'un arome très fin de nervosine. Là est la note spéciale de ce coloriste, et elle est complétée par une sollicitude inquiète pour ces raffinements mondains . . . qui ont fourni à Emile Zola de si belles, de si admirables pages."

The reference is to *La Curée* (1872), a novel in which Zola set out to paint what he calls the "Parisians of the Decadence," i.e., of the Second Empire. The book is full of descriptions of the clothes and boudoir of the heroine, Renée Saccard; they fit into the context, doubtless, but they are a little too lush and too highly coloured for mere background painting. Zola, like the Goncourts and like Huysmans, had a hankering for the gamy. Nor is this all. He had set out to write a study of manners, and he ended with a description of moral and aesthetic degeneracy. The novel's plot turns on an incestuous adultery between Renée and her stepson Maxime. From first to last, this theme is symbolized by the exotic flora of Renée's conservatory, a hot-house in direct descent from the allegoric botany dear to the critics of Baudelaire, and pointing in no uncertain fashion to the orchids of *A rebours* and *Le Jardin des supplices*. The idea of incest first occurs to Renée in this conservatory; and whenever she craves what is described as "une ivresse plus âcre" she takes her stepson there. A catalogue of the plants is given; it is more scientific than similar lists in Thierry and Gautier (Zola had consulted a treatise on botany), but it fulfils the same function: the caladiums, begonias, stanhopeia, etc. are all symbols of Evil.[20] Renée and her friends, of course, spend hours at their dressing-

tables. The identification of cosmetics with decadence appears again in *Nana* (1879), when Count Muffat's morbid passion for the actress begins as he watches her making up for the stage. He is described as "séduit par la perversion des poudres et des fards."[21]

Zola's interest in artificiality was more or less incidental; but the whole matter was of supreme importance to Huysmans. In *Le Salon de 1879, Croquis parisiens* (1880), and *L'Exposition des indépendants en 1880*, he takes a Baudelairean pleasure in describing the industrialized landscapes of the Parisian suburbs (factory chimneys, ravaged earth, sick vegetation, etc.) which he considers evidence of man's superiority to Nature: "Créée incomplète dans la prévision du rôle que l'homme lui assignera, la nature attend de ce maître son parachèvement et son coup de fion."[22] Although in *L'Art moderne*, he recommends something like Baudelaire's "modern heroism," and advises young painters to stop looking for classical and mediaeval subjects, the modernism he admires is almost invariably artificial and sickly. This appears very clearly in *Croquis parisiens*, where he reaches the point of preferring dressmakers' dummies to Greek statuary: "Combien supérieurs aux mornes statues de Vénus, ces mannequins si vivants des couturiers!"[23]

All these variations on an artificial theme are carried out in full orchestration in *A rebours* (1884). The hero, Des Esseintes, is described as having found in artificiality an equivalent of the Romantic ivory tower, a shelter against the unpleasantness of contemporary life.

> L'Artifice paraissait à Des Esseintes la marque distinctive du génie de l'homme. . . . La nature a fait son temps; elle a définitivement lassé, par la dégoûtante uniformité de ses paysages et de ses ciels, l'attentive patience des raffinés . . . quel monotone magasin de prairies et d'arbres, quelle banale agence de montagnes et de mers! . . . Cette sempiternelle radoteuse a maintenant usé la débonnaire admiration des vrais artistes, et le moment est venu où il s'agit de la remplacer . . . par l'artifice.[24]

All the embryonic suggestions of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and *Fortunio* are developed to their extreme limit. Des Esseintes' mistresses have to paint their faces and dress up; one of them, a ventriloquist, is even obliged to practise her art while he caresses her. He refuses to travel, contenting himself with various subterfuges—sitting in a bath of salt water, watching a school of mechanical fish, and so on. He prefers the locomotives of the French railroads to women in point of beauty;[25] has a set of cosmetics with every sort of perfume, paint, tweezer, lotion (the description occupies nearly two pages); buys a collection of monstrous orchids whose main virtue is that they all look artificial ("Il voulait des fleurs naturelles imitant des fleurs fausses"). The blossoms

are listed, like those in *La Curée*. Des Esseintes considers that they reveal man's superiority to Nature because they are too atrocious for Nature to have produced unaided: "La nature est, à elle seule, incapable de procréer des espèces aussi malsaines et aussi perverses."[26] Man's intervention, in short, produces something which is of necessity perverse and corrupt. Like all the rest of the cult of artificiality, this is orthodox Rousseauism turned inside out.

By the middle eighties, the cult of artificiality had become so characteristic a part of literature that it could be parodied. Gabriel Vicaire, in his skit on the decadent style, has a passage which is obviously a caricature of similar pages in Gautier, Baudelaire, and Huysmans: "L'Amour est une fleur de maléfice . . . lourde, aux parfums troublants . . . avec des striures verdâtres . . . son calice est gonflé de sucs vénéneux. . . . Ce n'est pas trop pour l'enfanter que l'artifice d'une civilisation profondément corrompue." And the "ideal woman" is not a *gardeuse de vaches*, but "une belle tête exsangue, avec de longs cheveux pailletés d'or, des yeux avivés par le crayon noir, des lèvres de pourpre ou de vermillion . . . le charme alangui d'un corps morbide . . . douze fois trempé dans les aromates. Voilà l'éternelle Charmeuse."[27] The "decadent" school was officially inaugurated in 1886 with Anatole Baju's little periodical, *Le Décadent*. In the number of October 1886, we find Musset's *Nuit de mai* rewritten in decadent terms.

> Regarde: le peignoir que tu veux m'enveloppe,
> Celui de satin noir, aux froufrous enchanteurs,
> Le peignoir aimé, doux, fleurant l'héliotrope,
> Et le corylopsis, parfums incitateurs!

This piece might have been written, and very possibly was, with Hannon's *Rimes de joie* under the parodist's eye.

Such parody, for that matter, is much less an exaggeration than a faithful copy. During the rest of the century, decadent literature wallows in cosmetics. Julia Belcredi, the fatal woman of Elémir Bourges' *Le Crépuscule des dieux* (1883), is described as "blanche et nue, frottée de parfums . . . avec son fard et ses paupières peintes dont l'artifice libertin attisait les désirs du jeune homme"—her lover.[28] The characters of Josephin Péladan's intolerable "éthopée," *La Décadence latine*, whose innumerable volumes appeared between 1884 and 1925, all divide their time between over-heated boudoirs and the Parisian slums, either painting their faces or seeking "l'ignominie des mœurs décadentes" in the dives of the capital.[29] In Mendès' *Zo'har* (1886), the hero's neurasthenia, we are told, results directly from Parisian artificiality—as represented by rice-powder. Paris is

la ville femme, la femelle de l'Europe, et quelle femme! ni chair, ni sang, ni os; du maquillage, rien dessous. . . . Ce qui vous délabre . . . c'est la poudre de riz. Il en sort de partout . . . des théâtres, de cages, des magasins, des ateliers et des égoûts. . . . La pluie sent la poudre de riz. . . . De là les névroses, les détraquements.[30]

Like Péladan's characters, Mendès' spend their lives in a boudoir-to-slum pursuit of "new sins," and the same applies to the extraordinary creatures of Rachilde's novels: they are seeking a "volupté factice." Paul de Fertzen, the hero of *Les Hors Nature*, prefers silk to female skin. "Cela," he says of a bolt of satin, "c'est de la beauté artificielle, mais c'est réellement, suprêmement beau. Toute beauté naturelle a une tare. Il n'y a pas . . . d'épiderme de gorge ou d'épaule qui puisse me donner une pareille sensation au toucher."[31] Paul's search for artificiality ends in a dabbling with sexual perversions—according to the formula supplied by Gautier in the *Notice*. The same is true of most of the other heroes and heroines of the time. Varieties of homosexuality were especially popular. It is certain that this craving for the sexually abnormal arose from the belief that it was somehow artificial. Verlaine defined pederasty as "un affranchissement de la lourde nature."[32] Paul Adam made a remark which is characteristic of the period when he called the Wilde scandal "contre-nature: mais le propre de la moindre civilisation est de répudier la Bonne Mère."[33] In Lombard's novel *L'Agonie* (1888), dealing with Heliogabalus, the emperor (painted and jewelled in *fin de siècle* style) is represented as trying to impose homosexuality, "l'amour artificiel," on the Roman Empire, in contrast to "l'amour naturel."[34]

The type-author of this sort of writing was Jean Lorrain. Remy de Gourmont called him "un esprit de serre-chaude, une plante rare," which produced poisoned flowers.[35] His short stories and novels are filled with pictures of Parisian corruption: strumpets and perverts, all in a setting of boudoirs, music-halls, and theatres. The men as well as the women are without exception powdered and painted: good specimens are Prince Noronsoff, in *Le Vice errant* (1902), who lives in an "atmosphère de parfums et de fards," has "les joues frottées de rouge," who, in an emotional scene "sentait la sueur désagréger son fard," and who later on "se décomposait sous son fard"; who is "un vrai cadavre vernissé, fardé et peint," a "poupée macabre et fardée."[36] Monsieur de Phocas, in the novel of that name (1901), is another good specimen. He is an imitation of Des Esseintes, a synthesis of decadence. Highly rouged, he frequents music-halls, brothels, and theatres (which he compares to the pleasure-haunts of decadent Rome), and finally, like

the hero of *Zo'har*, comes to the conclusion that it is precisely this over-indulgence in artificiality which is the source of his neurasthenia. "Tous ces visages de femmes, fardés et peints, toutes ces bouches au minium et ces paupières soulignées de kohl, tout cela a créé autour de moi une atmosphère de transe et d'agonie. . . . Le maquillage! c'est là d'où vient mon mal."[37] The hero of Octave Mirbeau's *Jardin des supplices* (1889) begins his confessions with a familiar sentiment: "La nature est . . . toujours et partout, semblable à elle-même . . . elle manque d'improvisation. Elle se répète constamment. . . . Moi . . . je ne tolère les fleurs que chez les modistes et sur les chapeaux."[38] It is true that he follows this with a general admission that he was wrong; but he was too much of his age to profit by such easy repentance. When he sets out to rediscover natural beauty, his search leads him to a nightmarish China, to an atrocious array of sexual perversions, all set in a "garden of punishments" which, although its plants flourish out of doors in their natural habitat, is nothing more or less than another version of the old Conservatory of Evil. The impression left on the reader is that by 1900 most writers had become so depraved by sixty or seventy years of artificiality that they were incapable of seeing Nature except in artificial terms.

The cult of artificiality is the key to the idea of decadence as the nineteenth century understood the term. Its most striking characteristic is its deliberation. By a voluntary contradiction of one of the basic tenets of Romanticism, the nature-cult, writers obtained a new platform from which to launch their ideas. They knew that they were going "against the grain"; there is something provocative and irreverent, a delicious sense of schism, about them all, from Gautier to Mirbeau. They grasp the nettle; they accept civilization as corrupt, but take a perverse pleasure in that very corruption, preferring the civilized to the primitive and the artificial to the natural. They thus add nothing new to Rousseau's premise, merely adopt a different attitude to it. Furthermore, by following a rigorous modernism, by turning away from traditional Romantic exoticism in both place and time, they found themselves dealing with a civilization which, owing to the industrial and economic changes produced by nineteenth-century science, was separating man from his old contacts with Nature to an unprecedented extent. The evolution of this tendency becomes clear if we compare *Fortunio* with *A rebours*. Gautier's novelette is a fairly-tale, in which science plays the role of a conjurer; Huysmans' book, written forty-seven years later, is a serious treatise, utilizing every recent discovery of optics, chemistry, and mechanics. Voluntary, too, was the new *ars poetica*. There was a

generally accepted idea that a poet must be inspired, must write with an ebullient disregard for both difficulties and mistakes. As a result, calculation of any sort appeared artificial, as Gautier pointed out in his essay on Baudelaire. Lastly, this insistence on the will as opposed to the emotions led to a new type of sensibility: a temperament at once energetic and languid, voluntary and neurotic: the dandy, soon to become the decadent, with his self-mastery, intellectualism, satiety, and his perverse obsessions. Behind it all, behind the lurid city-scapes, the overstuffed interiors, the powder, the rouge, and the learned obscenities—loomed the model in negative: the Noble Savage, vigorous and primitive, breathing the air of his virgin forests and fighting superbly for his tribal gods.

NOTES

1 Marquis de Sade, *Justine et Juliette*, III, 63; IV, 40. A full discussion of the Greek and Latin roots of primitivism, with all the pertinent quotations, will be found in A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas*, I (Johns Hopkins, 1935).

2 "Une existence conventionnelle où les décors de l'opéra éclairés aux quinquets remplaçaient la placidité des paysages lumineux," as Maxime du Camp, one of Gautier's friends, put it: *Théophile Gautier* (Hachette), 98–100.

3 Gautier, Preface to *Les Jeune-France* (Charpentier), vii-ix. These ideas may owe something to Nestor Roqueplan, whom Gautier knew around 1830, and who had similar tastes—if we are to believe what Gautier wrote of him: "Il avait déjà commencé sa croisade contre le soleil, contre la campagne, contre les voyages, contre la nature. . . .": "Nestor Roqueplan," essay dated 21 mai 1870, reprinted in *Notices romantiques* (Flammarion), 152.

4 Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (Fasquelle), 53–4.

5 Gautier, "Plastique de la civilisation," dated 8 août 1848; reprinted in *Souvenirs de théâtre, d'art et de critique* (Charpentier), 202–203. This essay was very possibly influenced by Baudelaire's *Salons* of 1845 and 1846.

6 Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," *Œuvres* (Pléiade), II, 355.

7 Baudelaire, "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," *Œuvres* (Conrad), V, v–vi.

8 After a chapter in M. Peyre's *Connaissance de Baudelaire*, one hesitates to talk about "influence" of any sort, besides which the question of Gautier's influence on Baudelaire has been a hotly debated issue for nearly half a century. To my mind, however, it is certain that Gautier furnished Baudelaire with a quantity of themes and ideas, and, as in the case we are discussing, got them back with interest.

9 Adrien Marx, *Indiscrétions parisiennes* (Faure, 1866), 217.

10 Jules Levallois, "Au Pays de Bohême," *La Revue bleue*, 5 janvier 1895.

11 Baudelaire, "La Fanfarlo," *Œuvres* (Pléiade), I, 553–4. Cramer is a half-ironical self-portrait. Marx (*op cit.*, 217) represents Baudelaire as writing to a well-known lady of the town: "J'irai vous rendre visite ce soir, peignez-vous bien."

12 For example, Louis Veuillot, Amédée Pichot, and E. Deschanel. Their articles are quoted by Bandy in *Baudelaire Judged by his Contemporaries* (New York: Columbia University Press), 40, 49, 71.

13 Thierry, Article of 1857, reprinted in the appendix to the Lévy edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 294–5.
14 *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Lévy ed., 310–11, and Bandy, *op. cit.*, 47–8.
15 Gautier, *Les Poètes français* (Hachette, 1862), IV, 597. Compare with Georges Rodenbach's description of *Les Fleurs du Mal* as "fleurs de décadence, germées de bitume parisien . . . floraison satanique et cruelle," and of Mallarmé's poems as "sensitives de serre, la serre chaude d'un cerveau en fièvre, plantes à la croissance artificielle et violentée," *L'Elite* (Charpentier, 1899), 12. Much of the verse in Maeterlinck's *Les Serres chaudes* (Bruxelles: Lacomblez, 1890) is as characteristic as its title. It would be literally impossible to count all the characters in the poetry and fiction of the period who collect and wear hot-house flowers—usually orchids.
16 Taine, *La Fontaine et ses fables* (Hachette), 60.
17 Taine, *Essais de critique et d'histoire* (Hachette), 57–8.
18 *Journal des Goncourts* (Flammarion), II, 202. Paul Bourget, writing on the Goncourts in 1885, called attention to the "tristesse épileptique et luxurieuse" of this passage (*Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine*, Lemerre, 188). By 1885 it was even more "in the period" than at the time it was written.
19 Théodore Hannon, *Rimes de joie* (Bruxelles: Gay et Doucé, 1881). Huysmans was a practising Naturalist at the time; three years before, in 1876, he had proclaimed himself a disciple of Zola in an enthusiastic article.
20 Zola, *La Curée* (Charpentier), 231.
21 Zola, *Nana* (Charpentier), I, 162–3.
22 Huysmans, "Vue des remparts du Nord-Paris," *Croquis parisiens* (Plon), 101.
23 Huysmans, "L'Etiage," *ibid.*, 131.
24 Huysmans, *A rebours* (Charpentier-Fasquelle), 31.
25 The exaltation of the machine was an inevitable side-product of the cult of artificiality. It was further developed a year after *A rebours* by Villiers de l'Isle Adam in his *Eve Future*. The story is little more than a "scientific" rewriting of Gautier's *Roman de la momie* (1858). Gautier told how a German Egyptologist, Dr. Rumphius, unearthed an "ideal woman" (Princess Tahoser) for Lord Evendale, a bored young English dandy, in the Valley of the Kings. In Villiers' story, Lord Evendale becomes Lord Ewald; Dr. Rumphius, Thomas Alva Edison; and Princess Tahoser, Miss Hadaly, a robot with golden lungs and electric joints, who eats pills of zinc, potassium, and lead. Edison manufactured her in one of his laboratories.
26 *A rebours*, 125.
27 Vicaire, *Les Déliquescences, poèmes décadents d'Adoré Floupette, avec sa vie par Marius Tapora* (Vanier, 1885), preface, xxxv–xxxvii.
28 Bourges, *Le Crépuscule des dieux* (Stock, 1901), 249. The novel, published in 1883, was written between 1877 and 1882.
29 Péladan, *Curieuse!* (Librairie de la Presse, 1886), 45.
30 Mendès, *Zo'har* (Charpentier, 1886), 54–55.
31 Rachilde, *Les Hors Nature* (Mercure de France), 79.
32 Verlaine, "Ces Passions," in *Parallèlement* (1889).
33 Quoted by Dr. Laupts in *Perversion et perversité sexuelles* (Carré, 1896), 161. Zola wrote the preface for this treatise.
34 Lombard, *L'Agonie* (Ollendorff, 1901), 76–7.
35 Gourmont, *Le Deuxième Livre des masques* (Mercure de France, 1898), 60.
36 Lorrain, *Le Vice errant—Coins de Byzance—Les Noronsoff* (Albin Michel), 160, 180, 282, 324, 359–60. In *Buveurs d'âmes* (Charpentier, 1893), 169, we even meet a statue of Christ with "paupières fardées."
37 Lorrain, *Monsieur de Phocas* (Ollendorff, 1901), 74.
38 Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices* (Charpentier, 1923), 71–2.

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: A Portent

George Whalley

I conclude, that Poetic Genius is not only a very delicate but a very rare plant.—COLERIDGE (1815)

Is there a Poet now alive who will pretend to believe himself equal in genius to Wordsworth's?—COLERIDGE (1819)

The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* has secured to itself generations of superstitious veneration. To pedagogues it has commended itself as a solid handhold where so much else eludes the grasp. It has been treated as central, not so much because it was unquestionably central, but because it was portable and expoundable. "To be mistaught," Wordsworth observes drily in the Essay Supplementary, "is worse than to be untaught; and no perverseness equals that which is supported by system, no errors so difficult to root out as those which the understanding has pledged its credit to uphold." It would be difficult to decide which has done more disservice to the understanding of Wordsworth and Coleridge: the careless habit of bundling them together into the capacious bosom of "Romanticism," or the amiable device of fitting them out in football jerseys of different colours and playing them off one against the other with the final result decided before the match begins. Wordsworth and Coleridge do not accommodate us by being either heavenly twins or sworn enemies.

The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* was in some sense a joint production. Yet a close study of the Preface, of its origins, and of the controversy it attracted in Wordsworth's day, brings one to see how peculiarly Wordsworthian a document it is, and how little rooted in Coleridge's practice of poetry or in his instinctive philosophy. Coleridge stood aside from the Preface; and the Preface, far from securing Wordsworth's poetic freedom, consolidated his movement towards disaster. The disaster was the arrest in his development when he was coming into his

force; the tragedy, that he courted disaster and secured his own downfall.

As soon as the 1802 version of the Preface had been published, Coleridge started trying to single out the "radical difference" he sensed between his and Wordsworth's views. Nevertheless he told Daniel Stuart that the Preface expressed "our joint opinions on poetry." Letters to Sotheby and Southey (July 13 and 29, 1802) are more cautious.

I must set you right with regard to my perfect coincidence with his poetic Creed. It is most certain, that that Preface arose from the heads of our mutual Conversations &c — & the first passages were indeed partly taken from notes of mine; for it was at first intended, that the Preface should be written by me. . . . But. . . .

I will apprize you of one thing, that altho' Wordsworth's Preface is half a child of my own Brain & so arose out of Conversations so frequent, that with few exceptions we could scarcely either of us perhaps, positively say, which first started any particular Thought . . ., yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth.

Wordsworth, nettled by years of quibbling public abuse—"insults which the ignorant, the incapable, and the presumptuous, have heaped upon these and my other writings"—asserted that he had written the Preface only to please Coleridge and at his insistence.[1] Certainly we can see Wordsworth declining Coleridge's monumental gambit of the "systematic defence" which should treat the subject with all "the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible." Coleridge probably did not mind that omission much; and he was "warmly [in] accord with Wordsworth in his abhorrence of . . . poetic licenses." But it was a *radical* difference that bothered him. He intended to publish his view at once, but didn't; and as he meditated the problem he was led to his distinction between Imagination and Fancy.

Nowhere does Wordsworth or Coleridge mention the Advertisement to the 1798 edition, either as the starting-point for the Preface or as a joint conception. Yet it is a fairly substantial piece of prose, and contains the germ of the "theory" which the Preface propounds. It also shows that, as early as 1798, Wordsworth considered *The Ancient Mariner* to stand outside the programme of *Lyrical Ballads*.

[It] was professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets; but with a few exceptions the Author believes that the language adopted in it has been equally intelligible for these last three centuries.

Whatever hand Coleridge may have had in the Preface, his association with what the contemporary reviewers called "Mr. Wordsworth's theory"

or "system" begins to look tenuous. The Preface laid Wordsworth open to repeated charges of "affected simplicity and meanness." But Coleridge, vexed to find himself accused of swimming in Wordsworth's wake, protested in 1813 against "This slang [which] has gone on for fourteen or fifteen years against us"—attacks which now charged his early poems with "sentimentalities, puerilities, whinings, and meannesses," the very opposite of what he recognized as their actual vices. "But," he continued—and he was to say the same in the *Biographia*—"if it had not been for the *Preface*, they would never themselves have dreamt of affected simplicity and meanness of thought and diction." To withdraw the Preface would have been a simple and comfortable solution; but Wordsworth did not withdraw the Preface.

Of the discussions that led to the theory of *Lyrical Ballads* there is unfortunately no contemporary record except for a few badly rubbed and elliptical pencil notes on the end paper of one of Coleridge's notebooks. The Preface itself gives no circumstantial account of the origin of the idea; and the account in *Biographia Literaria* is usually accepted without question because it is closer to the event than either Coleridge's prefatory note to *The Wanderings of Cain* (1828) or Wordsworth's Isabella Fenwick note to *We are Seven* (1843).

> During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination. . . . The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; . . . . For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life. . . . In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads"; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; . . . Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day. . . . With this view I wrote "The Ancient Mariner," and was preparing among other poems, "The Dark Ladie," and the "Christabel," in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt.

If the *Lyrical Ballads* sprang originally from a double programme, how did Coleridge get edged out of the 1800 title-page, when *The Ancient Mariner*, the longest poem in the collection, opened the volume and was the only poem other than *The Idiot Boy* to be accorded the dignity of a half-title? Several of Coleridge's poems written or begun in 1797–8 look as though they belonged to the *Biographia* programme: *The Three*

Graves (started by Wordsworth early in 1797), *The Wanderings of Cain* (an unsuccessful collaboration with Wordsworth), *Lewti* (also from Wordsworth's beginnings), *The Ballad of the Dark Ladie* (which never grew beyond a fragment and the splendid introductory poem *Love* composed more than two years later)—and *Christabel*, the most triumphant fulfilment of Coleridge's announced task. But was this task connected with the *Lyrical Ballads*, or did it come by a different and longer route? The mention of the "two cardinal points of poetry" in the *Biographia* can mislead the unwary: Wordsworth's programme could cover both. Coleridge, explaining to Davy in 1800 why *Christabel* was at the last moment excluded from the second edition, said that an argument of more consequence than the poem's excessive length was that it was "*in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published.*"[2]

As we move closer to the composition of *Lyrical Ballads*, the impression is confirmed—or at least not contradicted—that Coleridge may have encouraged the theory but was not led by it. The first attempt at poetic collaboration was *The Wanderings of Cain*, conceived during a walk to Lynton in November 1797. Each was to write one canto; the first one finished was to write the third canto; Coleridge had drawn up "the scheme and the contents." This has a fine pantisocratic swing to it, and reminds us how close we are to the Coleridge of Bristol composing antiphonally with Southey *The Fall of Robespierre* and (with differences) *Joan of Arc*. With *The Wanderings of Cain*, however, the arrest was sharp and significant. "I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original [as Wordsworth's] to compose another man's thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austerely pure and simple to imitate the Death of Abel?"[3]—which is perhaps only another way of saying that Wordsworth could no more have written *The Ancient Mariner* than Coleridge could have written it without the albatross Wordsworth provided him with. A comment of Wordsworth's to Barron Field comes to mind: "I gave him [Coleridge] the subject of his *Three Graves*: but he made it too shocking and painful, and not sufficiently sweetened by any healing views."[4]

The Ancient Mariner was conceived on the dark, cloudy evening of November 13, 1797. Dorothy records that during an eight-mile walk "William and Coleridge [were] employing themselves in laying the plan of a ballad, to be published with some pieces of William's": projected joint publication, but not necessarily a joint theory. Wordsworth's note of 1843 takes up the story.

Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I myself suggested. . . . We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. . . . As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly . . . our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. We returned. . . . The Ancient Mariner grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds, and we began to talk of a Volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of Poems chiefly on natural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote The Idiot Boy. . . .

The Ancient Mariner, then, preceded the programme. On biographical evidence alone one would be surprised to find it otherwise. Wordsworth in November 1797 had just finished revising *The Borderers*; Coleridge had finished *Osorio* only a month before and had been entangled in personal affairs that kept him away from Stowey until the beginning of February 1798; William and Dorothy were in London and Bristol for the whole of December and did not return to Alfoxden until January 3. "Mr. Wordsworth's theory" did not reach the tip of his pen until January 1798 at the very earliest and probably later. *Goody Blake*—"one of the rudest of the collection"—was probably the first of the programme poems. Bateson dates it "? January 1798": if in January, then in Coleridge's absence; if with Coleridge present, then February at the earliest. Just how *The Ancient Mariner* "grew and grew" is not known: it seems to have been mentioned to Cottle in November and January, and Coleridge brought the finished manuscript to the Wordsworths on March 23, 1798. But there is still no definite sign of a joint programme; and a letter Coleridge wrote to Cottle on February 18 announcing the completion of "my ballad" (?*The Ancient Mariner*) is concerned, not with some publication with Wordsworth, but with a projected third edition of his own *Poems*.[5]

During the spring of 1798 (and again unfortunately no *terminus a quo* can be firmly set, but March seems a likely starting date) Wordsworth wrote a number of lyrical ballads: after *Goody Blake* at least ten more, and *Peter Bell*, that most unColeridgean study of guilt. On May 9, 1798, he wrote to Cottle to say that he was impatient to see him to discuss the *Salisbury Plain*; he adds, "I have lately been busy about another plan, which I do not wish to mention till I see you."[6] Not we, but *I*: there is no mention of Coleridge in this letter. For Coleridge the months February, March, April, and early May 1798 were the only long idyllic passage in the *annus mirabilis*. By the middle of May the triune pattern

was beginning to disintegrate. Coleridge was shattered by the quarrel with Lamb and Lloyd; the Wordsworths would have to move soon from Alfoxden; plans for a trip to Germany were in the air, and *Lyrical Ballads* (when was the title first thought of?) was to help pay for it. Since the walk to Watchet and Dulverton in November, Coleridge had written *The Ancient Mariner*, the first part of *Christabel*, his three finest Conversation Pieces, two of his major political pieces—*France: An Ode* and *Fears in Solitude*—and probably *Kubla Khan*. Wordsworth's production was less diversified: *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, about a dozen lyrical ballads, the first version of *Peter Bell*, a few personal pieces of small size, and some passages of blank verse—including the first draft for what was later to become the Prospectus to *The Excursion*.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Wordsworth's theory of common speech and humble subjects does not dominate the *annus mirabilis*. Wordsworth's finest work in the period is not in that kind: and his finest contribution to *Lyrical Ballads* 1798, *Tintern Abbey*, moves from the bemused rhythmic spell of the half-Miltonic Prospectus "On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life" to the gentle intent note of Coleridge's Conversation Pieces. The theory had produced some experiments—whether experiments in the range of possible poetry or experiments in public response is not clear. Coleridge's first finished poem in the period was a masterpiece that he was never to excel. If he could write *The Ancient Mariner*, and then the delicate miracle of *Christabel*, and achieve the mellifluous intimacy of the Conversation Pieces, he had little need for Wordsworth's theory. He had already learned his lessons from the accident of Southey's fascination with exotic materials and his failure to turn them into poetry; from Lamb's counsel "Study, simplicity, Coleridge"; and from "the divine chit-chat of Cowper."[7] If he was writing during the *annus mirabilis* to any programme, it was a theory that looked back to the Bristol days of 1795 and had since matured to encompass a world of poetry and imagination perpetually closed to Wordsworth.

When Wordsworth wrote for the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* his disingenuous and condescending note on the revised *Ancient Mariner*, he neglected the peculiar merits of the poem, quibbled about imagined defects, and ascribed to it virtues which he had established as his own ideal. It is a curiously eighteenth-century performance.

> The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; . . . . Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is every where true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and

are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied. . . .

There is also a smack of Augustan critical terminology and presupposition in Wordsworth's phrase "to throw over incidents of common life a certain colouring of imagination," and in Coleridge's echo of this in the *Biographia*: "the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination." One begins to wonder whether Wordsworth's theory may have been made as a reaction *away from* Coleridge. Certainly it was to lie between them like an unsheathed sword.

Wordsworth was in dire peril as a poet, and dimly knew it; Coleridge was not. To assert that without qualification is to assert the absolute difference between the two men as poets. Wordsworth later hymned

> the buoyant spirits
> That were our daily portion when we first
> Together wanton'd in wild Poesy.

Yet from the beginning their relations cannot have been easy for either of them, though softened by early enthusiasm, by Dorothy's presence, and by Coleridge's unrestrained worship of "the Giant Wordsworth." Coleridge admired Wordsworth's extreme masculinity, his self-containedness, his rectitude, his fertility in composition. But he was not always blinded by Wordsworth's virtues, as a remark to Cary in November 1817 shows.

> If, indeed, I do estimate too highly what I deem the characteristic excellencies of Wordsworth's poems, it results from a congeniality of taste without a congeniality in the productive power; but to the faults and defects I have been far more alive than his detractors, even from the first publication of the "Lyrical Ballads," though for a long course of years my opinions were sacred to his own ear.

Lyrical Ballads is invoked again as the first and crucial issue.

If the inquiry is to be carried deeper, it must be taken back to the original Prefaces. Later evidence is more manageable but less trustworthy. Wordsworth's 1815 Preface moves in a different orbit and the *Biographia* is less clear and cool than it might have been; for Coleridge's book had suddenly crystallized around the butcher's reviews of *The Excursion* and that 1815 Preface in which Wordsworth openly challenged views on Imagination that Coleridge had for years circulated among his friends. Coleridge was in the awkward position of having

quarrelled irremediably with Wordsworth and of yet admiring his poetic genius; of being profoundly disappointed with *The Excursion* which he had nourished for years, and yet of half-agreeing with the points made against the poem by heavy-handed but not altogether wrong-headed critics.

What then was Wordsworth's theory meant to do? Certainly it would be expected to outflank "gaudiness and inane phraseology" as well as "tricks, quaintness, hieroglyphics, and enigmas." A theory serves a poet as a compass serves a sailor: it can keep him on a straight course, but it cannot find his destination. When we approach the Preface with the mind's attention awakened from "the lethargy of custom," and the celebrated sonorities temporarily laid aside, we encounter difficulty both in formulating the "theory" and in determining precisely what is ominous about it; for the arrangement is not clear, the argument more rhetorical than philosophical.

Lyrical Ballads, according to the Preface, had four purposes: (*a*) "to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" could be adapted to poetry; (*b*) "to make the accidents of common life interesting by tracing in them . . . the primary laws of our nature"; (*c*) to enlarge man's capacity for being excited without "gross and violent stimulation"; (*d*) to produce "a species of poetry . . . which is genuine poetry." Of these four, the last two being attainable need not delay us. It is behind the first two that Wordsworth's large assumptions lie.

In his desire to release poetry from the grip of inane diction, excessive stimulants, and dreary bombast, Wordsworth very properly turned towards simplicity. But on what evidence (other perhaps than Rousseauistic sentimentality) is simplicity and lucidity of language necessarily or exclusively to be found in "the middle and lower classes of society" or in "low and rustic life"? When Wordsworth gives his reason for choosing "accidents of common life" why does he assume for rural people exceptional clarity of emotion and special virtuosity in articulating their passions into speech when in "a state of vivid sensation"? On what evidence could he assume that in a rural setting "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature"? Why, in his insistent appeals to pleasure as a prime principle in poetry, does he draw special attention to the power imagination has of "tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions," yet neglect to discuss the complex pleasure that arises from contemplating the form of a good poem?

And why does he so often indicate poetic activity by the words "describe," "imitate," "represent"?

These questions cannot be satisfactorily answered from the Preface alone. And when we turn to the *Biographia* to see how Coleridge formulated his complaints, we find that even he ran into difficulties.

> With many parts of this preface, in the sense attributed to them, and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorise, I never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves.

Eventually he is able to localize "the positions which I controvert":

> they are contained in the sentences—"*a selection of the* REAL *language of men*";—"*the language of these men* [i.e. men in low and rustic life] *I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men.*" "*Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there neither is, nor can be any essential difference.*"

All these points Coleridge attacks by showing equivocation in terms or by evincing the authority of observed fact. The long passage Wordsworth inserted in 1802 to patch up the vulnerable discussion of prose and poetry was, Coleridge admits, in part at least "very grand, and of a sort of Verulamian power and majesty"; but it had not altered the position it was intended to support. In the end Coleridge draws up a list of characteristic defects of Wordsworth's poetry—inconstancy of style, matter-of-factness, ventriloquism, prolixity, mental bombast—defects drawn not exclusively from the *Lyrical Ballads* but from all the poetry to 1815. But there is no discontinuity in Coleridge's account. The discussion of Wordsworth's poetry had started from the Preface; because, even though Wordsworth had "degraded" it to the end of the second volume in the 1815 collection, "he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed." In the Preface there are prominent discussions of verisimilitude, truth to nature, the factual and historical basis of some of the poems. When Coleridge discusses the element of "matter-of-factness" in the poems, he makes an observation which may well lie at the root of all his objections, and of our suspicions.

> . . . a *biographical* attention to probability, and an *anxiety* of explanation and retrospect . . . seem . . . to destroy the main fundamental distinction, not only between a poem and prose, but even between philosophy and works of fiction, inasmuch as it proposes *truth* for its immediate object, instead of *pleasure*.

Coleridge takes this observation very seriously, raising it to the status of a formal definition: "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth." A misunderstanding by Wordsworth at this point—and the shift could be a very subtle one—could lead to a dangerous form of plausible realism; and this Coleridge proceeds to analyse at some length.[8]

As for the "theory," Coleridge cries: "I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interfered with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true genius." And he also proclaimed "decisively and aloud," that "the *supposed* characteristics of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry . . . whether they are simplicity or . . . faithful adherence to essential nature . . . are as little the *real* characteristics of his poetry at large, as of his genius and the constitution of his mind. . . . The natural *tendency* of the poet's mind is to great objects and elevated conceptions." By inference, from the Preface and from Coleridge, the theory can perhaps be formulated in unequivocal terms. It was an experiment in using simple language, "common subjects," and passionate situations in order to bring the reader into touch with the realities of the human heart. And this theory—if we may believe the prominence and emphasis given to the matter in the Preface—would also gratify Wordsworth's factual, almost clinical, interest in psychology, guided by "worthy *purpose*," habits of meditation, and a concern for "moral relations," and leading to "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents."

Tracing the path of this "theory" through Wordsworth's work, however, we find that his opponents may have been right in assuming for it a wider ambience than the collection entitled *Lyrical Ballads*. Of the class of poems that can technically be called lyrical ballads, about a dozen were written in 1798; the vein was momentarily transfigured in the Lucy Poems, all but one of which were written in 1798–9 and the last in 1801. Nine or ten ballads were added in 1799–1800, and another four within a week in the middle of March 1802. After that, very few: an occasional one from 1805 to 1808, less angular but not less discursive than the originals, tuned more to the manner of *The White Doe* than of *The Idiot Boy*. Most of the occasional and personal verses from 1799 to 1807—other than blank verse passages and sonnets—fall somehow within the theory. The strain can be traced from *Peter Bell* to the more bookish *White Doe*, with poems like *Michael*, *Resolution and Independence*, *The Solitary Reaper*, and the less plangent sections of

The Prelude lying along the same line. The theory lies heavy as frost upon the less satisfactory sections of *The Excursion*. Yet there is no denying that the theory had clarified and strengthened Wordsworth's poetic language and procedure, and had increased the range and extended the pace of his verse.

The poetry written to the programme, however, was not all that Wordsworth wrote during the Nether Stowey period, 1797–8. The first run of lyrical ballads is bracketed by the most powerful sort of verse he was to write: the Prospectus to *The Excursion* a month or so after *Goody Blake*; *Tintern Abbey* (a mixed performance) only just in time for the 1798 edition; some of the finest passages of *The Prelude* a few months later in Germany. The theme of "creative recollection" first comes to the surface in *Tintern Abbey*, that poem being the first full-grown child of the process. The same theme, less personal and in an aspect almost archetypal, had already appeared in the Prospectus. As a process it dominates *The Prelude*, and already in *Tintern Abbey* looks forward to the *Immortality Ode*—a dangerous rationalizing poem which persuaded Wordsworth that he was writing on the theme of immortality and not on the theme of his own death. This kind of memory must be sharply distinguished from the inexhaustible dream-crowded processes that informed *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*. By looking back Wordsworth could distance himself; and instead of describing "the passions of men" he could describe passions conveniently remote, yet more intimately perceived—his own. But in this Wordsworth was moving in a land most unlike the symbol-haunted country of Coleridge's mind. The events in memory were exhaustible because, though liberated from time, they were bounded by actuality: he was living on capital. How acutely Hazlitt observed, in reviewing *The Excursion*, that "The power of his mind preys upon itself"; for deliberate recollection progressively erodes memory. The personal memory was not too shallow a well for Proust, but it was too shallow for Wordsworth—not because he lacked psychological curiosity or insight, but because his "matter-of-factness" was disrupted by his sense of the numinous, and his sense of the numinous could not pass out of vagueness because of his literalness.

Mr. John Jones, in *The Egotistical Sublime*, gives a moving account of Wordsworth's distinctive genius: of his solitude, his literalness, his way of looking steadily at the world for what it was and nothing else; and how this is at the root of both his power and his narrowness. He describes him in Coleridge's phrase as *Spectator ab extra*; a man separate, holding his own inviolate retirement, gazing steadily at his subject

as though in the end it would yield its secret entire, believing—in the early years at least—that this world is substantial, that this is

> the place where in the end
> We find our happiness, or not at all.

For Wordsworth, subject and object are set over against each other, yet he sees them as "an intelligible complex." His mature stand is taken in the paradoxical and vulnerable attitude of "attachment-in-solitude," the work of the Great Decade being "a huge, sustained argument from solitude to relationship." The scheme of *The Recluse* was to clinch the position, showing how exquisitely the mind is fitted to the world, and the world to the mind.

Whoever thought of the scheme for *The Recluse* in the first place, Coleridge gave it as much encouragement and thought almost as if it had been his own. When Wordsworth had finished his preliminary self-inquiry in *The Prelude*, Coleridge was deeply moved by it; but *The Excursion*, published eight years afterwards, was a bitter disappointment to him. The trouble, Mr. Jones says, was that Coleridge in proposing a "philosophical" poem to Wordsworth naturally had in mind a Christian poem. If Coleridge complained that in *The Excursion* the imaginative strongholds of *The Prelude* had been surrendered, it was (Mr. Jones continues) because Wordsworth was *trying* to write a Christian poem—at Coleridge's instigation. The implication is that the birth of Christianity in Wordsworth involved the death of attachment-in-solitude. Returning to the *annus mirabilis* we find that Christianity was not a congenial topic of discussion between Coleridge and Wordsworth: Wordsworth was said to be "at least, a *semi*-atheist"; again, "on one subject we are habitually silent"; yet Coleridge acknowledged that his own Christianity was "too much my *intellectual* passion." There are no signs that Coleridge had anything but respect for Wordsworth's pagan vitality, nor that he would, for several books of *The Excursion*, have weaned him to "sound belief." Nevertheless he was concerned about Wordsworth's vulnerable position. Coleridge himself had renounced the attractive superficialities of Godwin some time before he met Wordsworth; Hartley too would drop out soon. His mind was already moving vigorously towards some formulation of the unitary consciousness, in an attempt to combine with imagination and reason the mysteries of conscience and the will. If his early Unitarianism was a naïve shortcut to the unity of God, and his early dalliance with atomic materialism a youth's hasty acceptance of a plausible analogy, he was not to rest long

with specious expedients. Accustomed from childhood to move in a transmundane realm, his mind "habituated *to the Vast*," he was struggling towards an adequate theory of association and imagination, fascinated as he was with his own "inner goings-on" both poetic and moral. Most of this was in the future in 1798: but the germs were all there. Wordsworth's resources were much more slender than this. To accommodate his sense of the numinous to his position of attachment-in-solitude, and rejecting the easy solution of a *deus ex machina*, he had taken up a fluid pantheist position. In the years between Bristol and Germany a pantheist strain appears in some of Coleridge's poems; but it disappears again, not in the face of Christian orthodoxy (though he eventually saw pantheism as atheism) but under the pressure of the poetic act. By identifying himself with an object and simultaneously distancing himself from it, he could do what Wordsworth hoped to do—"see into the life of things." Wordsworth said: "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject." Coleridge, however, had found that by holding an object sharply focused in his attention—whether actually present or not—the object could become translucent and without losing its identity evoke images, ideas, feelings not necessarily associated with it in the mundane sphere. He had in effect come upon the symbolic act, whereby the archetypal patterns of life and reality unfold and embody themselves. He was concerned with reality, and with that self-losing which is the supreme self-finding. His movement from Spinoza to the Neo-Platonists, Presocratics, and Cambridge Platonists, and to his favourite heterodox "mystics" like Swedenborg and Boehme endorsed and clarified his growing belief in *correspondances*, in the intimate relation of everything with everything else; Plato was always in the background. Wordsworth's stern and solitary preoccupation with the actual placed him at another pole; it could disclose to him a universe powerful indeed, but more vague and less populous than Coleridge's.

Yet it was Coleridge who encouraged, perhaps outlined, the vast scheme for *The Recluse*; Coleridge who proclaimed that "Wordsworth possessed more of the genius of a great philosophical poet than any man I ever knew, or, as I believe, has existed in England since Milton"; Coleridge who looked forward to *The Recluse* as "the *first* and *only* true philosophical poem in existence." He knew perfectly well that Wordsworth had neither talent nor taste for formal philosophizing; but his definition of philosophy was comprehensive enough—"an affectionate seeking after the truth." As far as one can see, Coleridge—although he passed a good many things on to Wordsworth—never thrust his own

philosophy upon him. Yet he must have appreciated Wordsworth's predicament and hoped perhaps that he could rescue him from danger. If that was his hope, he must also have understood that there was no way of effecting any radical change in Wordsworth unless Wordsworth could make the discoveries for himself. Did Coleridge deliberately urge Wordsworth into *The Recluse* as a therapeutic and redemptive expedient? And did Wordsworth, half-understanding what a crisis of self-making was confronting him, turn to *The Prelude* as an act—not altogether deliberate—of evasion? Coleridge probably did not see the crisis very steadily; half-blinded with admiration, beset with crushing concerns of his own, repelled at times by their temperamental incompatibility, he could not address himself continuously to the problem. In any case Coleridge did not see philosophy as a panacea, but as a clarifier, a definer of the limits of the comprehensible. "Philosophy in general," he noted in a memorandum book, "[is] a plummet to so short a line that it can sound no deeper than the sounder's eyes can reach—and yet—in certain waters it may teach the exact depth and prevent a drowning." In October 1803 he wrote an important letter to Poole—a letter which he urged Poole to destroy.

> I now see very little of Wordsworth: . . . I owe it to Truth and Justice, as well as to myself to say, that the concern, which I have felt in . . . [certain] instances, of Self-Involution in Wordsworth, has been almost wholly a Feeling of friendly Regret, and disinterested Apprehension—I saw him more and more benetted in hypochondriacal Fancies, living among *Devotees*—having every the minutest Thing, almost his very Eating and Drinking done for him by his Sister, or Wife—and I trembled, lest a Film should rise, and thicken on his moral Eye. The habit too of writing such a multitude of small Poems was in this instance hurtful to him— . . . I rejoice therefore with a deep and true Joy, that he has at length yielded to my urgent and repeated —almost unremitting—requests and remonstrances—and will go on with the Recluse exclusively. A Great Work . . . necessarily comprehending his attention and Feelings within the circle of great objects and elevated Conceptions—this is his natural Element. The having been out of it has been his Desease—to return into it is the specific Remedy, both Remedy and Health. . . . I have seen enough, positively to give me feelings of hostility towards the plan of several of the Poems in the L. Ballads: and I really consider it as a misfortune, that Wordsworth ever deserted his former Mountain Track to wander in Lanes & vallies; tho' in the event it may prove to have been a great Benefit to him.

Wordsworth did move away from the "small pieces," continued with *The Prelude*, and finally finished it. But that poem, for all its acknowledged splendors, proved to be also a movement along the line of *Lyrical*

Ballads confirming his egotism, impoverishing his imagination. If Coleridge ever urged Wordsworth strongly to Christianity, it would be to break up the frost of lovelessness, that fatal incapacity for a rapture that could not quite risk self-losing. "Wordsworth," Coleridge wrote in 1811—by which time Wordsworth was groping desolately, under pressure of bereavement, towards a genuine Christian belief—"Wordsworth is by nature incapable of being in Love, tho' no man more tenderly attached. . . ." In Coleridge's philosophy it was not metaphysical penetration that bridged the chasm between solitude and identification, but the active principle of love. "I believe," Coleridge wrote, "that *Love* . . . that specific mode of Being, which one Object only [? *at a time*] can possess, and possess totally, is always the abrupt creation of a moment—tho' years of *Dawning* may have preceded." Like Nicholas of Cusa, he saw love as a form of cognition mysteriously connected with the will. Christianity was one way—but not the only way—of finding that. Near the end of his life, Yeats wrote: "love . . . does not desire to change its object. It is a form of the eternal contemplation of what is." The shift of emphasis for Wordsworth was, then, infinitesimal and Coleridge can be forgiven for hoping to bring it about; but also the change would be radical and massive, and Coleridge had reason to be wary. The radical issue which Coleridge was powerless to resolve, though it came to the surface in a critical essay, was as deep as life.

Pinned to an empirical world from which he was powerless to release himself by philosophical insight or profound and flexible religious belief, Wordsworth populated his poetic world with solitaries, primordial, uncomplex, subhuman. Yet he was haunted by a powerful, ghostly, numinous world—

> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

This sense of "something far more deeply interfused" moved him to awe, terror, guilt, perplexity. He asserted that the world was an "intelligible frame"; yet it was only a "blessed mood" that could lighten "the burthen of the mystery,"

> the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this *unintelligible* world.

As these occasions came to him at longer and longer intervals, he could still turn his acute ear and eye upon the world for the uses of Beauty and the worship of Nature, returning—but with a melancholy differ-

ence—to the clear-browed world from which the numinous had dislodged him, and in which, if he had never left it, he would have been safe. In the 1815 Preface he reasserts the position he had started from, crying in Coleridge's teeth that the Imagination no less than Fancy is an "aggregative and associative power"; and that Fancy, though less sublimely conscious of "the soul in her mighty and almost divine powers," is also a "creative faculty."

The surprising thing is not that Wordsworth ceased for a long time to be a major poet, but that he discovered the inimitable manner of his maturity. For a time, language bent itself to his will: not through the specificity of clear symbolic usage, but through a process more obscure, difficult, original, and precarious; the weight being carried less by the words or the logic (which he had to some extent deliberately destroyed) than by the rhythms and a peculiarly involute syntax.[9] At moments of great poetic intensity abstract words and phrases take on the weight and solidity of the concrete, the sheer need for solidity in an insubstantial world forcing the emotional weight upon them until abstracts and generalities—as sometimes in Donne—take on metaphorical richness and depth; the movement of the syntax is not a pattern of logical relations so much as a musicalized image of the movements of mind and feeling. Passages of *The Prelude* and other poems have the air of sustained and coherent philosophy, yet closer examination shows that philosophically they say very little. Yet they are *poetically* sound, conveying the complex of thought and feeling in a very substantial and impressive body. Here most of all—more than in any claim for Wordsworth's "philosophy" or his view of the world—resides that originality that Coleridge was always insisting on: "the original spirit itself . . . a subtle Spirit, all in each part, reconciling and unifying all. Passion and Imagination are its *most* appropriate names; but even these say little—for it must be not merely Passion but poetic Passion, poetic Imagination." Wordsworth's lyrical gift was slight; his dramatic sense runs to ventriloquism; he has only limited powers of vision. The miracle is entirely his own; sometimes spare, sometimes complex, always (when it occurs) powerful; and most impressive of all is the massive brooding incantatory subliturgical rumination that seems often to have no clear beginning and need never have an end; the literal rendering with tough finality of his vague and ghostly world of unintelligible patterns and strong inscrutable emotions.

The inconceivable feat somehow was achieved and for a time sustained with the help of the theory of the Preface; and in the end his

work came to grief because—whatever the reasons—he could not advance beyond the theory. For a time he was borne along by the very literalness that had led him first to distrust and then to destroy the received poetic language of his time. Yet for want of a distinct symbolic procedure such as Coleridge had discovered and used, for want of a focusing method to redeem discursiveness, the theory and the kind of attention it implied drew him progressively into disaster. For there is no literal language that can "describe" or "imitate" what lay at the heart of his poetry—

> these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
> Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
> Or from the Soul. . . .

NOTES

1 *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years*, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1939), II, 910; III, 1248–9. See also Robert Sencourt's transcript of some Wordsworth marginalia on Barron Field's unpublished MS "Memoir of Wordsworth" in *TLS*, April 28, 1950. All these statements about the composition of the Preface were made after Coleridge's death.

2 *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford, 1956), I, 631; October 9, 1800. My italics.

3 Prefatory note (1828) to *The Wanderings of Cain*; see *Poetical Works of Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (Oxford, 1912), I, 286–7. Coleridge here dates the poem 1798, but November 1797 is surely the date on contemporary evidence. For evidence of *two* walks in November 1797, see *Wordsworth Letters: Early Years*, p. 174; and E. K. Chambers, *Coleridge* (Oxford, 1938), p. 99.

4 *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire (Oxford, 1940–9), I, 374.

5 *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, I, 387.

6 *Wordsworth Letters: Later Years*, III, 1340; an incomplete version of this letter, reprinted from Cottle, is at *Early Years*, p. 192. Can this "other plan" have been something to do with *Peter Bell*, which he started on April 12, 1798, and had completed by June; possibly a joint publication even of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Peter Bell* as two different treatments of the same theme?

7 For the importance of the early poetical relation between Coleridge and Southey, see my "Coleridge and Southey in Bristol, 1795," *Review of English Studies*, I (1950), 324–40.

8 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, 104–7. Cf. II, 56 where Coleridge recognizes—as Wordsworth's best practice shows—that "descriptions" can be transfigured by "the force and fervor of the describer," in Donne and Dryden, for example.

9 In *Biographia* II, 111 Coleridge remarks oddly upon the "faulty and equivocal syntax" of a characteristic section of the *Immortality Ode*.

The Grail Poetry of Charles Williams

C. P. Crowley

Charles Williams, Anglican layman, editor of the Oxford Press and lecturer at Oxford University, was a man of varied talents who illuminated any subject he touched, and whose interests ranged through history, witchcraft, literary criticism, theology, biography and drama. Best known for his extraordinary novels, Williams has not fared so well with his poetry which has been, for the most part, neglected by critics and ignored by the general reading public. This is a pity because among the several books of verse which he published over the years are two slim volumes containing some of the most fascinating poetry written in our time. The volumes of which I write, *Taliessin through Logres* (1938), and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944), contain his Grail poems, a reworking of the theme of the Holy Grail into a poetic myth of unusual wisdom and contemporary significance.[1] It is a unique handling, a fresh vision, of an old subject-matter which has been almost completely neglected in English literature.

The neglect of the Grail actually began with Malory. It may be observed in the use he made of the source from which he drew his inspiration for *Le Morte d'Arthur* (*La Queste del Saint Graal*, *c.* 1200), in the way he watered down its theological significance and made it subordinate to the chivalric material.[2] Following Malory, the Grail as a literary subject dropped almost completely from sight for over three hundred years.[3] It was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that it became popular again. When the revival came the Grail was treated as vaguely as in Malory, amounting at the most to a symbol of moral values, a vague mysterious ideal. In the period of its greatest popularity, the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, in the work of Tennyson, Morris, Westwood and the American, Robinson, the Grail symbolized contemporary morals which had been cut off from

their old roots in the traditional dogmas of Christianity. Consequently, with men writing in this new tradition, the treatments of the Grail were ethical in character rather than theological. It is safe to say that never during all the years that followed the introduction of the Grail to England did it symbolize the theological dogma which it had once represented on the Continent before Malory took it over.

Williams was personally aroused by the Victorian failure to appreciate the mystical meaning of the Grail as it had been understood in the Middle Ages when the symbol suggested Christ in all His significance for man.[4] He was convinced that if the mediaeval relevance of the Grail had been recognized it would have possessed those infinite theological and metaphysical overtones that would have made it a vital poetic image. In his own precise use, the Grail is a symbol of the exact relationship which man may have to Christ. He tells us about this in "The Figure of Arthur":

> Dante in a later century was to put the height of human beatitude in the understanding of the Incarnation; in a lesser but related method Angela of Foligno was to speak of knowing "how God comes into the Sacrament." To know these things is to be native to them; to live in the world where the Incarnation and the Sacrament (single or multiple) happen. It is more; it is, in some sense to live beyond them, or rather (since that might sound profane) to be conscious of them as one is conscious of oneself, Christ-conscious instead of self-conscious. The achievement of the Grail is the perfect fulfillment of this, the thing happening.[5]

Williams believed in the Divinity of Christ. He believed, too, that the coinherence of Divinity established in the Incarnation was continued in the Eucharist—a fact which makes Christ still the central figure of history and the key to the ultimate meaning of life. "To know these mysteries is to be native to them, to live where they happen," says Williams. One lives where they happen through faith. But faith is only the first step in the ultimate transformation of the soul into union with God in the Beatific Vision. The achievement of the Grail for Williams, then, is the perfect fulfilment of that supernatural progress in the mystical life of which faith is only the beginning. Achievement makes one "Christ-conscious instead of self-conscious"—Williams' personal way of expressing the Pauline transformation, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." Williams thinks in the pattern of traditional Christian mysticism which has always taught that Christ is God and that one goes to God only through Him. Christ is the gate of the City.[6]

In terms of this approach to the Grail, Williams decided to rework the Arthurian material himself, making the search for the Grail a spirit-

ual adventure in the mystical sense, an adventure which would be the central theme of all the Arthurian matter. The various tales of the knights and ladies of Arthur: Lancelot, Guinevere, Percivale, Lamorak, Palomides, etc. would have meaning only in relation to the Grail; the whole kingdom of Arthur would exist for the Grail. Williams' intention thus was to use the story of the Grail as it had never been used by an English poet before him.

In his conception, Logres (Arthurian Britain of the fifth century) is designed by God to be the place of the coming of the Grail, and of the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ. He imagined that King Pelles was to guard the Grail in Carbonek until a predestined time when he was to direct its journey into Logres where it was to be a prelude to Christ's second coming on earth. The predestined time would occur when Logres was established as a peaceful ordered kingdom with Arthur as its king. Christ would then say mass in Logres as he had long ago in Jerusalem. Thus the great sacrifice of praise offered from the beginning in the Trinity, begun on earth at the Last Supper, would be completed on earth. Man-in-community having successfully passed through his period of trial would become part of the City of God—the Apocalyptic City of God.

But Arthur and his leaders, who were to prepare for the Grail by their exercise of those virtues which makes a good city, neglected their duty and spoiled God's plan. The coming of the Grail to Logres was postponed, but the inhabitants were given a chance to achieve it privately. Thus they symbolize the state of the Christian soul which may be saved individually while still awaiting the promised Parousia. In Williams' conception the Arthurian material takes on an apocalyptic character; it becomes a myth which symbolizes the Fall of the race through Original Sin, the fall of individuals through personal sin, and the Christo-centric means by which both are redeemed. The story of the Round Table and the Grail unfolds in a far wider universe than the old universe of Malory. The centre of the myth is Byzantium, capital of the Roman Empire, with Logres simply a far distant province. But the Emperor is more than an earthly ruler: he is a symbol of operative Providence at work in time and space. There is also the kingdom of P'o-l'u and its mindless emperor—the region of anti-God or evil. Between these two antithetical supernatural courts the knights, ladies and servants of Logres experience adventures which are far more significant than the old chivalric adventures they knew in the pages of Malory. These are adventures of the soul, and those concerned in them have

symbolic roles in an apocalyptic action in a universe where the natural and supernatural are intimately united.

They are adventures of the soul among those items of reality, those facts in every life, which in the Christian teleology may become meaningful and significant in terms of one's ultimate salvation. Duties, habits, problems, relationships, may bring us closer to or farther from our ultimate goal, may make of every moment a sacrament or an ignoble thing. Williams' universe was this sort. He believed that the Incarnation elevated all material creation along with the immaterial, enabling man's use of creation to become a means of carrying on the work of redemption which will be complete only at the end of time. In expressing this traditionally Christian way of life Williams used a personal idiom; he spoke often of the *images*—a term which must itself be understood if we are to understand the adventures of his knights and ladies of Logres.

As a result of his Christian faith Williams believed that nothing in the universe was significant by itself. Each thing though distinct from God was an image of God. When he uses the term he is thinking of things as they exist in reality—natural forms which are images in that they have a theophanic aspect, reflecting a higher power; in Christian eyes they reflect some aspect of the Divine nature. Based on this concept of the analogical nature of all images Williams has constructed a personal vision of the ways by which men might reach God. In Christian tradition there have always been two main approaches to God: the ascetic way of the great mystics and the way of the average Christian living in society. Williams regards these simply as contrasting methods of handling images. In the first way the soul realises the insufficiency of images and understands that any one of them if made an ultimate end apart from God becomes an idol substituted for God, not a means to God. In the second way the soul grasps the fact that every thing is an image of God which may lead him to God if it is oriented towards Him. Williams refers to these ways in his own personal idiom as the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Rejection or Negation of Images.

This attitude to experience is really Christian and sacramental, based on the belief that all matter was carried on to God and all things could be good and meritorious for us because of the original assumption of humanity in the Incarnation. The phrase "sed assumptione humanitatis in Deum" from the Athanasian creed ('by taking manhood into God') defines the Incarnation but it also involves all lesser "takings" into God, all meritorious uses of all images: food, drink, art, poetry, love, marriage, scholarship. The list of images which can be "taken into God"

by being put in order towards Him is as large as reality. All the characters in Williams' myth are accepting images or rejecting them and are thus adventuring on one of the two great Ways to God.

By using his theory of images Williams makes the Grail the vital centre of his myth. The characters by their attitude to their own personal images—Arthur with his politics, Guinevere and Bors with their marriages, Taliesin with his poetry, Palomides and Lamorak with their illicit loves—are put close to or at a distance from its achievement. The Grail thus becomes personal and significant for all of them and associated closely with their everyday life.

The poem, *The Calling of Arthur*, is a good illustration of one image in action. King Arthur's personal image is his royal function as king and ruler of his people. Merlin the wizard is preparing the Kingdom for its union with the Grail. He is speaking to Arthur, describing the chaotic conditions of Logres and advising Arthur of his duty to lead the growing revolt of the people. The poem is indirectly a lecture on the function of kings, and an instruction to Arthur as to what he should do when he becomes the ruler of the state.

The present pagan ruler, Cradlemas, is not fulfilling his function. As a king he exists for the people, but he has forgotten that duty. The total effect of the poem's imagery reveals his cold inhumanity and lack of interest in his subjects. The sight of misery does not lead him to action.

> The waste of snow covers the waste of thorn;
> on the waste of hovels snow falls from a dreary sky;
> mallet and scythe are silent; the children die.
> King Cradlemas fears that the winter is hard for the poor.

The king's failure to act is emphasized by the fact that others are doing from charity what the king should be doing from duty.

Merlin calls on Arthur to join with the people, and lead them in the building of the new city of Camelot. The poem closes with a description of the successful culmination of the revolt, as the people under Arthur's leadership organize the new state.

It is significant that Williams has only one king defeated by Arthur. In Malory there were eleven. For Williams the kings are significant only in relation to the theme which he is creating. They represent the forces of disintegration which Arthur is dedicated to oppose, and Williams chooses one of them as the symbol of royal failure to fulfil function of office, and surrounds him with imagery which contributes to this conception.

In later poems there are many who succeed on the way to the Grail. They use poetry, religious life, menial labour as ways to God. One of the most interesting is the use of marriage by the knight, Bors, as expressed in the poem: *Bors to Elayne; the Fish of Broceliande*. In this poem Bors' sacramental vision of his love for his wife Elayne is portrayed in unusual symbolism. Bors imagines that he has caught a fish in the sea-wood of Broceliande, a fish which he presents symbolically to his wife. In Williams' myth, Broceliande is the symbol of the energies and the powers which must be controlled on one's way to the City of God; it is the symbol of the spiritual places one must pass through to attain the Grail. In Bors' life Broceliande becomes his wife, and the fish caught in one of its streams is their newly found love. It is a thing of mystery as all human love is. What is its name, its nature? Bors has an answer. It is a symbol of their love but it is also an ancient symbol of Christ: their love then is also Christ. Their love which could easily be merely human, a misused image, is a love in Christ and therefore of sacramental value. It is a used image, an image directed to the City of God. As Bors offers it to his wife he mentions that it is her creature too —a new creature—found in her married relations with her husband.

> Will you open your hand now to catch your own
> *nova creatura*? through stream and cataract sped,
> through shallow and depth? *accipe*, take the fish.

The poem ends with Bors' vision of Elayne as his Broceliande united with the City of God. He sees the light of the City shining through her flesh, illuminating the way to the achievement of the Grail.

> yet the wood in the wild west of the shapes and names
> probes everywhere through the frontier of head and hand;
> everywhere the light through the great leaves is blown
> on your substantial flesh, and everywhere your glory frames.

In a later poem, *The Last Voyage*, we see Bors with Galahad and Percivale on the last step of the mystical journey to Sarras and the Blessed Trinity. Gratefully he is praying for his family.

> Bors, mailed in black, completing the trine,
> their action in Logres, kneeling on the deck to their right,
> the flesh of fatherhood, unique as they in the Will,
> prayed still for the need and the bliss of his household.

Elayne has remained his means of sanctification to the end. She has been a true image—the adventure of his soul in which he found the Grail.

Williams' technique in giving the events in Malory a wider, more mythic meaning appears brilliantly in his use of the Dolorous Blow. In Malory, Balin the Savage had struck King Pelles, the Grail-keeper, and wounded him. After this blow Balin and his brother killed each other unknowingly, and Arthur unknowingly committed incest with his sister Morgause. Williams makes the Blow a much more complex image. It becomes a symbol of the egocentricism which is of the very nature of evil. The evil actions of Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and the others are all manifestations of the Dolorous Blow, so that the Blow becomes the exaltation of self that lies behind all sin. The whole complex of evil in the myth is thus seen as one continuous flow from the original sin of Adam. Every sin is seen to be part of the blow that killed Christ; every sin is seen as a link with the original sin in the sense that all are disordered movements of self. This conception takes the Dolorous Blow out of its context in the Arthurian story and puts it into the broader context.

This interpretation is born out by a comment of Williams where he remarks that Arthur and Lancelot were tempted by basically the same temptation: the inordinate desire for power.[7] Both think that if they can get something for themselves, the state or Guinevere, they will be powerful. Their error is in failing to see that power is something one is, not something one has. In every case in the cycle where images become disordered the cause is the desire for power, expressed in the desire to possess images, whether they be the contingent knowledge of Adam, Arthur's desire to possess the state, or Lamorak's desire to possess Lot's wife. The Dolorous Blow, therefore, as Williams conceives it, is all sin seen as a simultaneity: an effect having a common origin and a share in the nature of the perversion of good.

From a theological point of view this poetic expression is an attempt to portray the way sin (committed in time) must look to God (outside the time series). God, transcending time, sees all human actions in an eternal now, an eternal present, not in the past-present-future sequence with which we are familiar. If one could see all men in one vision, past, present and future, spread out in time as God sees them, they would look like a single growing being, a great complex related growth, all interconnected: a cosmic man. Their sins would appear to be one sin, one universal turning inwards to self, one giant blow against God.

This mythic conception of the Dolorous Blow appears very early in the cycle, as early as Arthur's coronation night, at the moment when

Lancelot led the queen into the king's presence. We read it towards the close of *The Crowning of Arthur*:

> So, in Lancelot's hand, she came through the glow,
> into the king's mind, who stood to look on his city:
> the king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the king?
> Thwart drove his current against the current of Merlin:
> in beleaguered Sophia they sang of the dolorous blow.
>
> Doom in shocks sprinkled the burning gloom,
> molten metals and kindling colours pouring
> into the pyre; at the zenith lion and dragon
> rose, clawed, twisted, screamed;
> Taliessin beheld a god lie in his tomb.
>
> At the door of the gloom sparks die and revive;
> the spark of Logres fades, glows, fades.
> It is the first watch; the Pope says Matins in Lateran;
> the hollow call is beaten on the board in Sophia;
> the ledge of souls shudders, whether they die or live.

As the evening draws on Merlin sees the moral issues which will interfere with Logres' destiny. Arthur at the very beginning of his reign is thinking of his city, and the temptation enters his mind: is the city for him or he for the city? Confronted by the same problem which had faced his predecessor Cradlemas, Arthur too is deviating from the line of duty. As he betrays his function in his mind the Dolorous Blow which is to destroy Logres and reject the Empire is struck. And then in the very next line we read that Sophia is "beleaguered": the reference to Sophia symbolizes the attack of the Moslems on the city of Byzantium, a theme which is developed later in the three poems revolving about the Moslem knight, Palomides.

Palomides is one of Williams' great poetic inventions. A Saracen knight, he becomes a symbol of Islam which is imagined by Williams to be contemporary with Logres. The reason for the paralleling of times is that Islam was theologically the symbol of all denial of exchange in its rejection of the Incarnation. It is the great historical expression of the worst form of that pride that lies at the root of the Dolorous Blow: the rejection of God's own fact, the Incarnation. Here then Arthur's unwillingness to exchange his will and pleasure for the well-being of the city is put side by side with the Moslem refusal to accept the Incarnation: the two rejections are seen to be symbolically identical. The identity is made clearer as the poem goes on and we see the results of

the Dolorous Blow in the kingdom: disorder, the loosing of the formerly controlled powers to prey on each other. These become symbols of the evils that result when order and unity are disrupted in the city and when the images escape all control in the personal lives of the inhabitants of Logres. "At the zenith lion and dragon rose, clawed, twisted, screamed"; the imagery of the two heraldic animals fighting each other reflects the opposition that is to arise between Arthur and Lancelot as a result of the latter's love for the queen.

The imagery of the light and sound in the last stanza adds a penitential Lenten mood to the setting. Where in the early part of the poem we were told that "the kingdom and the power and the glory chimed" in Sophia, now we read that "the hollow call is beaten on the board in Sophia." The call refers to the noise made by the wooden clackers used as substitutes for bells in the Holy Week liturgy as liturgical instruments of penance. The final line "the ledge of souls" may refer to the ledge of souls in hell which Dante describes, but here seems to apply to the souls in hell or Limbo who waited for the coming of Christ, and whose release is described in many mediaeval poems under the title of *The Harrowing of Hell*. The "god" which the poet Taliessin sees in the tomb appears to be Christ whose death is being commemorated in Sophia, and whose body is still in the tomb. The various Incarnation images (Holy Week liturgy, Limbo, the Harrowing of Hell) reinforce the notion that the god in the tomb is Christ, and the total imagery suggests the period between Christ's death and Resurrection, when souls were poised in expectation and suspense waiting for the event which would set them free.

In this poem, Arthur's sin, the Moslem rejection, the loosening of images in general in the kingdom, all together form the Blow which would put Arthur's kingdom in a parallel position to that of the human race after Adam's sin. Because of the part of the race that occurs in Logres the kingdom stands in need of deliverance: there is analogy between Arthur's sin and the Blow which caused the death of Christ, or any Blow which causes the rejection of Christ. It is very clear that Williams' Dolorous Blow is a far different thing from the single physical blow struck by Balin in the original story as Malory has it: in Williams' hands it has a universal significance, a relevance for all men of all time.

This enrichening symbolism of the Dolorous Blow is only one illustration of the way Williams has given the traditional material a new life and vigour and a contemporary value. The new conception of the Blow as a symbol of the disordered lust for power is especially significant

in a civilization like ours which has seen the desire for power go to the most extreme and inhuman limits.

It seems to me in summing up Williams' work that it offers an original contribution to the Arthurian tradition in English literature. It expresses a traditional religious belief in a fresh idiom, giving it a new and modern application by the use of rich and complicated symbolism. It certainly proves that religious poetry need not be stereotyped. Williams believed that Christianity was greater than all the myths when used as a poetic theme. It is worth noting that shortly before he died he praised Milton for making a mythic use of Christianity.[8] He added that Milton fulfilled Virgil by setting the centre of life and verse outside man. Williams felt that no future poet could alter or surpass Milton's achievement, but thought a great poet might modify, enlarge or correct and therefore heighten and complicate the theology. This process would unite the things of heaven and earth more than Milton does. It is perhaps a glimpse of what Williams himself was attempting to do.

NOTES

1 *Taliessin through Logres* (London, 1938); *The Region of the Summer Stars* (London, 1944).

2 For a thorough discussion of this subject see E. Vinaver, *Malory* (Oxford, 1929).

3 Sister M. L. Morgan, *Galahad in English Literature* (Washington, 1932), p. 92.

4 See Williams' remarks in the following works: *A Book of Victorian Narrative Verse* (London, 1927), pp. v–vi; *The English Poetic Mind* (Oxford, 1932), pp. 190–192; "Malory and the Grail Legend," *Dublin Review*, CCXIII (1944), 145.

5 Williams, "The Figure of Arthur," pp. 78–79. This essay along with Professor C. S. Lewis's "Williams and the Arthuriad" is published under the title *Arthurian Torso* (London, 1948).

6 For an excellent treatment of these ideas see Williams' essay, "The Redeemed City" in *Dublin Review*, CCIX (1941), 120–128.

7 "Figure of Arthur," p. 89.

8 Review of C. M. Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton*, in *Time and Tide*, XXVI (1945), 439–40.

Review Article

*Seven Types of Milton Criticism**

Milton's poetry has always provided an arena for the contentions of critical schools because of its range, the depth of its unifying principles, its cathartic function in resolving its author's tensions, the shifting of attitude under way in his day and continuing in ours. This is illustrated for the present by the rather mixed bag of recent studies listed in our note; and the following comments should therefore, though inevitably and painfully superficial, be of some interest not only to militant Miltonists but to less sectarian readers attentive to the character of literary studies in general. What is demonstrated by this accidental collection, partly British, largely American, is the extraordinary vitality and variety of current academic criticism and its impressive level of intention and accomplishment.

Milton criticism is even more than usually symptomatic at the moment because of his peculiar status and the special character of the critical contention over him. For many general readers he remains the symbol of an other-worldly perfectionism, a conventional rigidity, a cold moralism. There cannot be many these days who read him privately for inspiration or for pleasure; fewer read him for both. A "Milton festival" would seem to some profane, to most a contradiction in terms. His direct influence on practising poets is still probably not much above its lowest point since 1645, despite some revision of the wasteland and penitential opinions of the twenties and thirties. So little is his poetry current among the *literati* that it must be long since anyone has been heard to utter, during one of those delightful intermissions wherein the *avant garde* unsweats itself from its labours, even the classic critical comment beginning "Malt does more than Milton can" and ending not with a whine or a whimper but with a vaguely irreverent misquotation. Yet the prominent place Milton at present occupies among the pocket-books and in all liberal-arts, great-authors, or survey-of-English-literature courses, is not merely the result of his historical importance or the forceful zeal of the kind of persons he frequently attracts as his interpreters. If this may be taken as illustrating the gap between contemporary taste and educational endeavour, the lively response of many students to his poetry would surprise the middle-aged who still regard him from an anti-Puritan or anti-Victorian viewpoint. It suggests that the gap between generations is apt just now to manifest itself in ways that would astonish nineteenth-century liberals and radicals—and do astonish their survivors among us. If Milton seems at first remote and forbidding to such students,

they are entirely likely to find (with good teaching) that his poetry is so far from being a monument to dead ideas that what is apparently remote and forbidding about it is a challenge and a device designed to throw into focused relief insights into the realities of human experience that are as valid for the twentieth as they were for the seventeenth century, however they may have been missed by lost generations. All the items in our note are concerned to bridge these gaps, either by the application of new critical methods or by the modified application of old ones; and it is this endeavour that has of late intensified once more the traditional conflict of critical opinion over Milton.

Milton's interpreters have always been notable for their imitation of the disputatiousness and assertiveness sometimes displayed by their subject, but lately they have tended to divide (or to be divided) into two sharply opposed camps. On the one hand are the academic humanists, historians of culture and especially of ideas, who are supposed to think of poetry in terms of rational statement—"denotatively" was yesterday the word—and of the "neo-classical" canons of form, and to approach it through the traditional methods of humanism (or, more pejoratively, the graduate school), ideologically, ethically, historically, biographically, prosodically, philologically, and so forth. On the other hand are those—loosely and inaccurately called "new" critics since their ways resist any more generic categorization—who are supposed to think such methods render poetry an absolutely dead thing and who aim at "understanding" it by accentuating what used to be termed the "connotative," through explicatory methods derived from (though not necessarily authorized by) the refined and intelligent aestheticism of the twenties, with rather more emphasis on talent—and peculiar talent—than on tradition, yet an insistence that a good poem is nearly anonymous, existing in its own verbal universe or as part of a constellation in a poetic universe, and that it must therefore be treated not in historical terms but in terms of poetic immediacy. Its meaning (or meanings), not being the meaning of prose statement, must be apprehended through a close study of its poetic texture, using the devices of rhetorical rather than philosophical analysis, and concentrating attention on paradox, ambiguity, ambivalence, levels of meaning, overtones and undertones, on archetypal, typological, epiphanic, eschatological, rhetorical and symbolic patterns of imagery, and so forth.

In the case of Milton this difference of opinion has been exacerbated by the fact that the so-called "new" approach was developed largely in relation to Donne and his school and that the rehabilitation of Donne in the twenties was conducted at the expense of Milton (who seems to have been confused for this purpose with a misunderstood Tennyson). Academic critics of the traditional variety sprang to the defence of Milton, especially as a humanist or Christian humanist displaying more unified sensibility, or at any rate more unified sense, than Donne, so that the opposition between Donne and Milton and the methods was intensified. In due course Milton proved too interesting and complex a poet to be thus disposed of or defended, though curiously enough the romantic "Satanists" were almost completely extinguished in the struggle; and as the method originally applied to the

metaphysicals was given extended application, it was discovered by the "new" critics that he had all along been a true poet and of their party and could and should be read in their terms, a discovery which has of course served even more to annoy the academics, especially such as have not yet discovered that Donne can be read Christian-humanistically, particularly if one begins with the sermons.

To attempt such a brief characterization of the two camps is of course the height of presumption; and the attempt is as futile and wrong-headed as the current habit of ranging them in opposition, for there are happily infinite varieties as well as extremes in both schools and lively degrees of disagreement everywhere, as several of our items will show. Yet our collection also shows that they do tend to be opposed in dubious battle and that this opposition springs from our immediate critical and educational necessities. The methods of the academic humanist, it is said, may be traditionally definitive and may provide the student with something more or less intelligible to put down in his notebook; but if one considers the literary *tabula rasa* provided for the colleges, despite the efforts of good teachers, by mass secondary-school education, this, it is said, remains an empty routine. One must renew and modernize tradition and aim above all at inducing a lively and sensitive aesthetic response in the student to the poem (as it is phrased) *qua* poem—and, presumably, if one wishes the support of educational theory, to life *qua* life. But this, it is otherwise said, is simply to run the risk of filling the *tabula rasa* only with agitated muddle.

It is perhaps an old opposition: if the vice of the traditional academic method is pedantry, the vice of the opposing method is sophistry. Our authors do their best to avoid both, and though it would require a high degree of temerity just now to attempt any large characterization of their common virtue—the catholic *via media* being always in danger of violent ejection by one of the extremes or, what is worse, of proving mere neutralism—they remind one that the best in English poetry has never been marked by simple theoretical self-consistency but, like the language itself, achieves its purposes by holding in effective relation a number of theoretically irreconcilable elements. To demonstrate how it does so is the principal task of the critic; and to this task in the case of Milton our studies address themselves in their various ways.

In its astringently polemical dissatisfaction with the distortions produced by both our houses, R. M. Adams' *Ikon: Milton and the Modern Critics* seems representative of the state of mind of many students. Like Eve at a crucial moment early in her experience, Adams thinks the need is not for more seed and cultivation but for "a firm hand on the pruning shears" as a preliminary to the discovery of "some secure principle" of interpretative control and co-ordination. If his concern to extinguish "false lights" is as yet more obvious than his development of principle, inevitably he inclines to attack newer approaches from the angle of academic humanism and academic approaches from some other angle.

Thus with much freshness and good sense he castigates those who, like Cleanth Brooks and J. E. Hardy, "overread" Milton's early poems, notably *Comus*, by treating them as if they were "metaphysical" poems whose pro-

gression must be explicated in detail out of the imagery, with a concentration of attention on the indirect, witty, cryptic, ambiguous, esoteric, and arcane that implies a perversely "ingenious chaos" and obscures the urbanely serious unity of Milton's entertaining masque. To such he adds on the one hand the more historically minded (like D. C. Allen), for obscuring such poems as *Lycidas* behind a dense archaeological web of Renaissance literary conventions, and on the other archetypalists (like Werblowsky in his recent Promethean interpretation of Satan—a late and Jungian instance of Satanism) whose undiscriminatingly vague universalizings obscure the subtle manipulation of such patterns (for Adam and, Adams might have added, the Son are Promethean too) and distract attention from the dramatic handling of character that subordinates such figures as Satan to the principal concern of the epic, man's story. Somewhere between the subtly particular and the vaguely universal, Adams seems to feel, lies the unifying principle we must grasp. And the most interesting pages of the book occur when (having attacked those who like Miss Darbishire would amend the text of the later poems in the belief that Milton aimed at an intricately expressive system of spelling, capitalization, and so forth) Adams tackles the question of the extent to which Milton made use of expressive verbal devices, of puns, word-play, and other connotative rather than simply denotative effects. There is a great deal of sensitive and both new-critical and academic good sense in his proposition that one must be willing to admit "a complex of rich meanings" when they do not raise "exorbitant difficulties" and to recognize a "counterpoint of complex and elaborate senses" co-ordinated by one main sense. Yet how to isolate and describe this main sense without allowing it to congeal under one's hand remains a problem.

All anti-pedants will hasten to agree with Adams that no unifying principle is to be discovered simply by tracking Milton's learning (rabbinical, if he had it, astronomical, classical) through its sources in the out-moded graduate-school manner, though there is perhaps something more to be said for co-ordinated knowledge as a point of departure. But he also urges us to disbelieve those who (like Lewis and Bush, to name only the most eminent) have taught us to seek the unity of *Paradise Lost* in its basic Christian orthodoxy or in its relation to the Christian-humanist tradition. Despite his dislike of subtle explication, Adams exemplifies the current anti-rationalist suspicion of systematic ideas and especially theology as ossifying. Milton's theology cannot be sold to modern taste, and in any case his chief problem as poet was that he "could not count on an adequate abstract system in the [? modern ?] reader's mind." Consequently his "poetic style cannot be consistently related to any single set of values, any distinct audience or philosophy or critical creed or subject matter"—a series of unhistorical *non-sequiturs* that surely reduces all to anarchy again. As for Christian humanism, in Milton's last poems it becomes, "without ceasing to be Christian humanism, . . . a conflict rather than a definition, an emotional warfare against an inner conflict rather than a philosophy in the customary sense."

Not being able to perceive how Milton's Renaissance theory of poetry

might have led him to revise this statement by substituting "resolution" for "conflict" in the first instance and "poetical" for "emotional," we are reduced (to avoid the conclusion that his poems simply issue in stalemate) to an uneasy response to his dramatic representation of the human situation and, since that remains an enigma, to Milton the man and his "image of himself as the magnanimous man."

With Adams and many students, Kenneth Muir is naturally much inclined in his "Men and Books" account towards this "human" emphasis on Milton the man as a more manageable object of interest and imitation than any principles provided by his poetry and so as an issue out of our critical afflictions. If here, as elsewhere, the emphasis tends to present the man despite his poetry and without his ideas, this semi-popular reassessment can stand comparison with others of the sort that have appeared in England since the war not only in its easy use of recent scholarship (even American) but in its urbane willingness to make use of a variety of critical methods in evaluating the poetry. The adverse opinions of the wasteland provide Muir with a point of departure, pleasantly offset by allusions to the contrary opinions of such names to conjure with these days as Hopkins and Dylan Thomas and by ironic comparisons of Miltonic effects of allusiveness, accretions of unparticularized detail, in-landscape, with the characteristic techniques of Mr. T. S. Eliot. But the controlling theme is provided by the question "whether in fact Milton deteriorated as a poet after 1638." The answer arrived at is only reservedly negative, for, like a great many modern readers, Muir finds the early poems generally more attractive, is disturbed by the temper and wearied by the ideas of the controversial prose, and finds the last poems forbiddingly expressive of Miltonic tensions heightened by a Puritanical Stoicism and a reliance in defeat on "the inner light and not much else."

What comes out most clearly in the very knowledgeable and readable biographical sections is the gap between the acrimonious and surly controversialist (to use the Boswellian adjectives) whose test for liberty was the "holding of Miltonic views," and the private man, here characterized nicely in terms of the sonnets and rarely so sensitively appreciated, whose urbane affability, equanimity of temper, and warm-hearted generosity (to paraphrase Muir) brought him the affection of numerous friends. Unhappily, despite his sympathy, tact, and good taste, Muir does not try to see the later poems (however archangelic their urbane sociability) as efforts to reconcile and preserve what was best in both Miltons.

Many readers should be attracted by his judicious appreciation of the art of the early poems: the unerring choice of diction that differentiates them from their less Jonsonian if richer Spenserian models, the intelligently scenic representation in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* of two amiably relatable (not opposed) frames of mind, the poetic tact and propriety of compliment in *Arcades*; especially fine is his discriminating treatment of *Comus* as a variation of the masque handling the Christian-humanist scheme of virtues to exemplify a social virtue more or less Platonically conceived. But it is a pity that the half dozen highly illuminating pages on the movement of Milton's prose style—from a polemical Ciceronianism to a simplicity and

directness such as Halifax appreciated more than is usually supposed—are not supported by or made the basis of any attempt to get below the superficially summarizable surface of Milton's opinions and to appreciate the exact quality of the developing experience on which Muir's controlling question turns. To think of Milton's revolutionary experience as merely "frustrating" and to miss the fact that frustration on the level represented by the reforming prose may be the occasion of fulfilment on some other level, more important to the seventeenth-century if not to the modern mind, may be to misread the centre of Milton's total experience in a way that results from and contributes to an imperfect reading of his later poems.

Everyone must admire Muir's appreciation of the poetic texture of these poems, as a touchstone of taste too valuable to lose, even if his account of them seems defensively and compromisingly apologetic: his defence of such devices as the similes and name-lists not only for sonority and richness but as functioning both to develop and to widen the implication of theme; his feeling for the ritual intonation of the blank verse and its "perfect marrying of sense and rhythm"; his perceptive comments on the epic's shifting style and his explanation of its propriety, even of Michael's "bare statement of doctrine"; his comparative comments on *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, on the mature and subtle simplicity of style in the latter, and on the noble austerity of the verse of *Samson Agonistes* and its striking use of choral rhyme.

Yet one feels that, despite this discrimination of "poetic" qualities, the sense, the theme, to which they are married remains obscure, even unappreciable. Muir recognizes much more clearly than Adams that "critics have often misinterpreted the poet by regarding his religious views as comparatively unimportant or by failing to recognize that neither his political nor his religious views were static." But so long as Milton's God appears, as to Muir, "a repulsive conception of the deity" or, as to Adams, a deity who (like the worst of critics) makes the universe "an insoluble enigma of his will so that he may be amused by the silly endeavours of men to understand it," one must conclude that either the poem or modern criticism is a failure. Muir pleads that in his later work Milton wisely chose themes in the treatment of which the lesions of his controversial experience appeared as little as possible, but one feels constantly on the point of some insight of which one is cheated. We must try to be satisfied with Werblowsky's "dichotomy of European consciousness equally deriving from Palestine and Greece"—Saul of Taursus, surely, rather than Paul?—as equivalent to the tension between "the two sides of Milton's mind and temperament." Then, having agreed that without this tension the poetry "would have been lacking in complexity," we must appreciate (with Tillyard) the "psychological realism" of Milton's dramatic representation of human experience (in the temptation scene both Adams and Muir still think the centre of *Comus*, in the exemplary Miltonic Christ of *Paradise Regained*, in Book X of *Paradise Lost*), and so seek some sort of "human-love" principle that runs the risk of reducing the situation of Adam and Eve at the Fall and after to the level of *comédie larmoyante*. Thence (Milton's Stoicism having prevented that risk and the toughly theological framework that might prevent

humanism from becoming sentimental humanitarianism not being available to us) we must retire to the autobiographical significance of the last poems (and especially of *Samson*, where Adams and Muir are perhaps at their best), to "the lofty spirit" of Milton the man—the poetry in which alone that spirit is embodied having slipped in fragments from our grasp. It is perhaps as it should be. But Muir reminds us (and himself) that "Milton, however egotistical, was never merely personal in his poetry." That startlingly simple indication of what poetry did for him may enable us to start again.

The pervasive distaste for Milton's ideas is carried even further, at least initially, in *An Anatomy of Milton's Verse* by W. B. C. Watkins, who believes that heavy-handed research into thought and sources has resulted in a critical imbalance and aims to right matters by beginning at the other extreme and insisting that "to a unique extent" Milton's poetry is, in a phrase of his own, "simple, sensuous, [and] passionate." A footnote and occasional parentheses indicate an awareness of a Miltonic context that ought not to be ignored: if, as Milton actually said, poetry is more thus (and less subtle and fine) than rhetoric, presumably it also involves in some degree the thought and the organized argumentative devices of rhetoric, and a really balanced critique should concern itself with the unique proportion and relation of all such elements in any given poem. As a matter of fact, what makes Watkins' anatomy rewarding is its movement from its brilliant appraisal of Milton's simply concrete sensuousness to an effort to come to grips with his view of the problem of passion, an effort in which philosophy (with ethics and even some theology) will be found constantly breaking through, though not so cheerfully as to avoid a conclusion even more desperate than that of Adams and Muir.

We certainly need to be reminded constantly (especially we academics) of the instinctively physical quality in Milton's imagery that makes his treatment of the experience of fall and original sin seem to Watkins comparable to James Joyce's. And Watkins' first section ("Sensation") everywhere shows how intelligent good taste can avoid the pitfalls of a merely lyrical epicureanism, in its analysis of the extraordinary sensuous range of *Comus* (and, inevitably from this point of view, of Comus), its illustration of the plastic dramatization of sound and sight, taste and smell and touch in *Paradise Lost* to fill verse and action with energy and movement, so that we have always the sense of the image happening to us in physical terms as we read and everywhere the impression of animated fertility in Milton's world, whether corporeal or spiritual. Indeed, in the face of the "orthodox" insistence on the hierarchical order of Milton's thought and universe, we also need to have emphasized, as in the second section ("Creation"), the instantaneous and plentitudinous continuity of the divine creative act, underlined by the complex but unified handling of time and space as a controlling theme of a large part of the epic. If the neo-Platonists' "female" principle in creation is something we and Milton find difficult to handle, we do need to be reminded of the "passionate vitalism" illustrated by the affairs of unfallen angels and men and underlined by the perverted creation, the de-generation, of Satan, Sin, and Death.

But it does not follow that we must be left in the third section ("Temptation") confronted by a merely Stoic divorce between sense (or passion) and reason, exacerbated by "the maze of Milton's theological shortcomings." That the maze may be ours rather than Milton's is suggested by Watkins' unusually sympathetic response to Milton's Son, though he does not recognize in the creator Son all the lineaments of the redeemer and so finds Satan, not the Son, more human than God.

If with Watkins one compares *Paradise Lost* (or rather with him the first two-thirds of it) with the Lady's masque and with *Paradise Regained*, one may certainly see that Milton is concerned with "the inner conflict of passion and reason" as a basic problem; but it does not follow that Milton—or at any rate his poetry—is trapped by it. Watkins is impressed not by the relation but by the ambivalent gap between nature and grace in *Comus*, and—notwithstanding a much more subtle response than is usual these days to the dramatic representation of the difficult psychology of self-love and love in Adam and Eve—by the repudiation of the epic theme of plenitude, enforced for him by what seems the shift from "body to mind" in *Paradise Regained*, with a resulting central rigidity in Christ's "rejection" of classical culture, and despite the splendour and power of the poetry, the "bitter resignation" of *Samson Agonistes*. If all this sounds rather more like Lawrence and Joyce than like Milton, that is perhaps because the "modern" mind is even more concerned with and more merely against sin than Milton's was. The theme of his poetry is never merely (though it may remain primarily) sin and the Fall or even temptation, and perhaps the function of his poetic dialectic is not merely to assist the critic to formulate an insoluble dilemma but to raise it into a context more largely imagined and more highly organized than a mere dualism, a context in which, especially when it is most corporeally and spiritually sensuous, the dualism of sense and reason is rendered an illusion and transcended. One wants from Watkins (what a little more good theology might provide) at least a further section. It might be headed "Re-generation" or "Re-creation," and it would partly concern itself with what Milton had in mind when (as scholars tell us) he hit upon the distinction between sensuality (which is sinful) and sensuousness (which is not).

R. H. West's *Milton and the Angels*, a sober historical examination of a segment of Milton's thinking that might be thoughtlessly condemned for imbalance, leads towards these matters by quite a different route. Though angelology may seem beneath the interest of the modern and relatively unimportant in Milton's doctrine, West sees that it points significantly to the centre of his epic. If repetitiousness and a reluctance too soon to involve the literary in the theological make the historical half of the study seem remote, West demonstrates in the end that angels were "indispensable to the description of God's providence in his corrupted yet still functioning universe" (a phrasing that should interest Watkins) and, further, the contradictory implications for a reading of the human situation of a scholastic intellectualism that seemed to make their providential assistance too rationally regular, an occultism that made them so procreatively and imminently functional as to undermine the sense of corruption, and the conflicting

Puritan denial of angelic free will with corporeality and insistence on angelic instrumentality in the execution of God's will. Both in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* Milton's angelology follows the orthodox Protestant ("Augustinian" might have been better) middle line, reproducing generally received notions as to the time of the angels' creation, the preservation of such as did stand, the deathlessness of all such beings, but disagreeing with general Puritan opinion (though not with other schools) on the freedom of angelic will and service and with nearly all authorities (though less with the occultists) on the matter of angelic bodies, sustained by food and capable of experiencing love.

West has some interesting suggestions to make about Milton's sources, but he is principally concerned to illustrate, with much perceptive detail and in a way that should give Watkins comfort, how this angelology underlines and energizes Milton's idea of the continuity of the natural and the spiritual. Happily, the complexity of the background he commands and differences between Milton's systematic theology and the activity of his poem induce some even more significant questions that warrant more thought. Though *De Doctrina Christiana's* explicit angelological doctrines are consistently carried over into the epic to provide the framework for the poem's characterization of its angels and their peripheral yet intimately analogical function in developing its plot and themes, the poem involves aspects of angelology not present in the treatise—assumptions about the substance of angels, their power to appear to men, to eat, and, especially, to love. As a matter of fact, something the same is the case with virtually every segment of Milton's doctrine; and since West is naturally concerned primarily through his method to find some way of differentiating what Milton "seriously believed" and what he merely used for poetical purposes, West and Watkins (who both deal much in angels) provide a neat illustration of the feud between our houses which leaves the poem's marriage of sense with sound, the doctrinal with the fictional "argument," pitifully star-crossed.

But if philosophy strives to break through in Watkins, poetry keeps bothering West because of his command of the complexity of angelogical doctrines and his sense that Milton has all along been seeking some unifying principle that will render these an illuminating comment on the human situation. With most academic interpreters his concern with ideas inclines him to segregate the "poetical" from them and to accept a simple Elizabethan and even Baconian "*ut pictura poesis*" or essentially "allegorical" theory of poetry, or as a last resort to think Milton guilty of "literary opportunism" when it is convenient to do so. But his dissatisfaction with such simplifications leads him to look constantly for some further insight: "the angelology which retains in *Paradise Lost* some sort of doctrinal standing is the Puritan, whereas the rest of it is for decoration or the forwarding of the story or for making some special point that itself transcends angelology."

What such points are concerned with is perhaps not simply the continuity of the natural and the spiritual. One might, with angelic assistance, profitably go more thoroughly than West does into subtler illustrations of that principle than food and love—the continuity of discursive and intuitive reason, or of reason and imagination, even of theology and poetry, and those

other matters over which Raphael has such illuminating trouble. But one cannot deal adequately with Milton's angels without dealing with his devils; and it is to be regretted that West could not give more attention to Abdiel's difficulty with Satan, for their debate might focus attention on the lost problem of angelic free will and help to explain why West need not think Raphael any more "embarrassed" than Watkins in talking of love. If one remembers that the rose of love may blush in two very different and contrasted ways, one need not go very far in order to save appearances. All that is needed is the act of comprehensive and creative discrimination that Raphael has been endeavouring to make clear to Adam and the poem to us.

The Miltonic version of the Christian doctrine of discriminating sobriety or temperance in learning is the theme of another even more solidly scholarly work, Howard Schultz's *Milton and Forbidden Knowledge*. Nothing even remotely approaching justice can be done here for its account of this principle, with its Socratic, Pauline, Augustinian, and Bernardine suspicion of vain philosophy, its various manifestations among rationalists, activists, and quietists of every stripe, and its importance at every level of Renaissance experience, from the relation of reason to faith to the Revolutionary dispute over education and a learned ministry. If the dense variety of the background, with stylistic virtues and vices that suggest both Burton and Browne and a mass of freighted notes that avoids being Burtonian only by not being marginal, tends to confirm the author's scepticism as to the real value of systematic thought, his lively if not always declared engagement impresses one with the intensity of the times' vertiginous activity and of Milton's Joycean response to its complexity.

But this only serves to stress the consistent development of Milton's temperately high evaluation of learning throughout his career and to demonstrate his close (though particular and ambivalent) relation to moderate rationalists like Chillingworth and Whichcote on the one hand and on the other to the least extravagant of the sects, the Baptists not the Quakers. At first this may seem little more than a confusing reassertion of the "Christian humanist" interpretation; but Schultz is concerned to inject into that formula more animation and less definition than it usually has and especially to avoid its tendency to disintegrate (as with those more literary critics to whom we earlier attended) into either Christian Stoicism or quietism with reference to the later poems and the "spectacle of a defeated old man" throwing himself upon God's incomprehensible though justified ways "in craven surrender."

With much vivid detail Schultz illustrates how Milton consistently defended and progressively evolved amidst various extremes a view of learning's place in experience which bridged the gap between reason and faith "with that ethical reason which, in a regenerate Christian, he called spirit" and involved a conception of a deity "whose word could be studied by scholarship, whose ways could be rationally defended, and to a remote point explained." From this point of view *Paradise Lost*, with its series of angelic discourses, takes on a new vitality as a progressively educational poem, with Raphael's astronomical warning to Adam proving no "quibble" (as it seems to Watkins) but a "grand commonplace" implying a "long tradition of profit-

able homily," one of many Miltonic instances of "a liberal humanism preaching ethics in the name of rational religion and to that end deterring [vain] speculation" but without implying any altered faith in the learning Adam is in process of acquiring, with the reader.

But if such a reading helps to explain why the epic remains an important instrument of liberal education, *Paradise Regained* with Christ's firm repudiation of the classical tradition remains to give us pause. Believing the two poems "differ so entirely that a single explanation can hardly fit both," Schultz develops the strikingly ingenious view that, while "Socratic humanism" is involved in the context of the former's effort "to teach the salvation of men," the latter is concerned with "the salvation of the Kingdom of Christ," the church. It is intimately related to the reforming complaint against a hireling, worldly, and academically learned ministry and is meant "to set a pattern not primarily for the Christian layman but for the church and its ministers." It therefore expresses the sparer side of temperance by insisting on "the antihumanistic principle of scripture's absolute sufficiency" and all that that implies concerning faith.

This reading focuses attention on a dimension of Milton's poetry apt to be missed by merely literary and humanistic critics, and it is supported by a deep understanding of Milton's Protestant problem and of the crucial problem of the meaning of "the Kingdom." But it is difficult to see how it is to be prevented from setting off another chain-reaction of segregations that will end by exploding Raphael's world once more. Perhaps the presence of Socrates in the poem and the fact that Milton never seems to have withdrawn his conviction that minister is but layman writ large should suggest a less drastic separation of the regaining of Paradise from its loss and some reconsideration of the meaning of "all our Law and Story strew'd with Hymns." It is possible that everything Milton says of learning has its application to scripture as well, and to poetry and criticism, and that we are inclined to ask both Milton's poetry and criticism to do too much. *Paradise Regained* is, after all, a Lenten poem, and as such preliminary to Good Friday and Easter; and it is remarkable with what serenity the preliminary collect for the second Sunday after Easter combines in a subordinate clause the sacrificial and exemplary functions of Christ. If the author of *Samson Agonistes* did not revise his earlier views on prayer books, the verse he wrote after labour and intense study with devout prayer to that celestial spirit may have performed something like the same unifying function.

That is certainly the impression left by F. T. Prince's beautifully articulated if all too brief metrical study, *The Italian Element in Milton's Verse*. The historical perception of Milton's debt to and modification of Tuscan metrical principles of the *cinquecento* (unattended to by "classical" prosodists like Bridges) enables Prince to illustrate Miltonic effects such as interest Adams and Muir and Watkins but prove to be of more than merely "literary" significance. Having assimilated, up to and including *Comus*, what he could effectively use from his English metrical heritage, Milton turned to the theory and practice of Della Casa, Bembo, Tasso, and their effort to achieve a weight and dignity of utterance comparable to the ancient but by ways appropriate to their modern language, by the breaking up of verses,

strong pauses within the line, the suspension of the sense, frequent elisions, the avoidance of common usages, the conscious complication and distortion of word order, and other such devices calculated to produce the *asprezza*, roughness or, better, difficulty, they thought appropriate to urbane high seriousness.

It is to be wished that Prince could have found more space for explaining his sense of how Milton preserves the essential vitality of his native language while imitating these practices; but Milton's progressively creative manipulation of the principles of his models is perceptively illustrated in the account of the sonnets, where rational plainness and solidity are thus made poetic; of some of the shorter early poems, where the typical devices are developed within the architecture of the *canzone* and the derivative madrigal; especially of *Lycidas*, whose complex rhetoric of rhyme and sentence structure uses them to create an effect of continuous unfolding and development; and finally of the later epic and tragedy. (One hopes the omission of *Paradise Regained* indicates that it is reserved for special treatment: it demands it.)

What this approach deepens when it is sensitively applied in detail to the blank verse of the later poems is of course one's sense of freely expansive but serenely controlled movement. The verse seems to develop by "a sort of natural impetus" (through minute parallelism, duplex and other pleonastic devices, like the added adjective and recollective), with "an effect of indescribable suspense and fullness" (got by consonantal clogging, collocations of open vowels, elisions, syntactical flexibility), but with its "ebb and flow of statement" everywhere enlivened by the surprise which offsets monotony (through the metrical and verbal ingenuity with which Urania, like wisdom, playfully recreates herself), yet with the sense always being variously drawn out in lines "almost but not quite released from obligation" and unobtrusively controlled and maintained, not by rigid feet, but by the preservation of the fourth- or sixth-syllable stress and especially by the stressed final syllable that implies a sustaining but absent rhyme.

Though Prince does not go out of his way to say so, he clearly perceives that this phrasing is not merely metrical. He wisely leaves one to meditate on the contrast betwen the tendency of the Italian *literati* towards a frigid artificiality and a pedantic triviality, in conflict at once with urbanity and seriousness and illustrated by Tasso's failure, through "intellectual mediocrity," to reconcile his deepening religious emotion with his romantic literary form, and Milton's sense of the vitality of his own tongue and his discriminating imitation of his models to express a "living apprehension of his religious theme" in "a form of poetry in which everything is unified."

Unity, though of a different sort, is the aim of Miss Darbishire's edition of *The Poetical Works*, now completed by its second volume. In this, the earlier poems offer few serious problems once one has recognized the obvious authority of the text of 1645 and decided to modify it only reservedly in terms of the manuscripts and the clear corrections of the edition of 1673. However, the last two poems are carefully revised according to the principles applied to the first volume's text of the epic, the assumption being that Milton, "a poet to whom every nuance of sound had value," developed (what fallible printers did not consistently reproduce) systematic

devices of spelling and capitalization to indicate sound and meaning and metre (*we* and emphatic *wee, human* and *humane*, cordial *spirits* and angelic *Spirits, Heaven* and *Heav'n*) and of punctuation to support meaning and the musically syntactical evolution of his verse paragraphs.

Happily, Miss Darbishire (having more disciplined taste than Bentley, allowing for Miltonic inconsistencies, and sensitively respecting the possible play of metrical variation) has "shrunk from imposing a rigid consistency" since "Milton would not have cared for that nor have tried himself to impose it."

Reviewers like to think that this handsomely and (being modern) accurately printed edition, with its superb critical apparatus, the fruit of long and devoted study, marks the beginning of a new epoch in Milton criticism. Perhaps it does; it certainly commands respect. Yet some critics are bound to feel that it irons out some interesting little ambiguities. There have already been lively differences of opinion (as in Adams) over some of its emendations, and there will certainly be more—providence having moved in its usual mysterious, though recreative way, in thus transmitting the blind poet's illuminating text to us (to use his own comment on the mere text of Scripture) through "such uncertain and variable guardianship" as that of the seventeenth-century printer.

A. E. BARKER

*R. M. ADAMS, *Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1955. Pp. xix, 231. $3.75.

KENNETH MUIR, *John Milton*. London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co. 1955. Pp. x, 196. $2.25.

W. B. C. WATKINS, *An Anatomy of Milton's Verse*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1955. Pp. xii, 151. $3.00.

ROBERT H. WEST, *Milton and the Angels*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 1955. Pp. x, 237. $4.50.

HOWARD SCHULTZ, *Milton and Forbidden Knowledge*. New York: Modern Language Association of America. 1955. Pp. viii, 309. $5.00.

F. T. PRINCE, *The Italian Element in Milton's Verse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press [Toronto: Oxford University Press]. 1954. Pp. xv, 183. $2.00.

The Poetical Works of John Milton, edited by HELEN DARBISHIRE. Oxford: Clarendon Press [Toronto: Oxford University Press]. Vol. I, 1952; vol. II, 1955. Pp. xl, 326; xx, 374. $10.50.

Reviews

History of Criticism for our Time

History, whatever its particular subject, requires to be rewritten at intervals. Not only does knowledge accumulate, but focus changes and possible insights multiply. In every serious effort of historical interpretation, two elements are operative: first, the sense of the past as something fixed and unchanging, to which the historian owes his primary allegiance and which he must learn to enter on its terms, not his own; and, secondly, a sense of the present as the outcome, however remote and indirect, of the past which he is examining, and as capable, therefore, of casting a light back upon it, of bringing into relief features which can now be seen to have a special significance, and even of modifying in some degree the larger patterns to be educed.

This consideration is certainly relevant to Professor René Wellek's rewriting of history in the volumes under review (*A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950*. I, *The Later Eighteenth Century* [1750–1800]; II, *The Romantic Age* [1800–1830]. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1955. Pp. x, 358; vi, 459. $4.50; $5.50). A history, he avers, "cannot be written without a frame of reference, a standard of selection and evaluation, which will be influenced by our own time and determined by our own theory of literature." To a knowledge of the past, both extensive and detailed, which is not, however, identical with a sense of the past, he adds a strong—if, one may suspect, an assiduously cultivated—sense of the present, which is capable of sharpening certain perceptions and of affording to his inquiry certain fruitful directives, but which may also entail some inhibitions and issue in some curiously partial judgments—a danger no doubt increased by the position which Professor Wellek has chosen to assume.

The contemporary situation in literary criticism is in the highest degree interesting and not a little baffling. As compared with the period, just over half a century ago, when George Saintsbury published his *History of Criticism in Europe from the Earliest Texts to the Present Day* (1900–3), the activity, especially in North America, is prodigious; the clash of ideas is continuous; and the vehicle of it all is a terminology almost entirely lacking in definition. In the final volume of his *History*, Professor Wellek may be expected to come definitely to grips with this situation and to provide us with a much-needed chart. Meanwhile his sense of the present unmistakably colours his account of the past. One of the most striking features of this

present is the flight from literary history and the rejection of historical method, which has ranged the "critics" and the "scholars" in opposing camps and greatly impeded the process of mutual education of which they stand equally in need. Additional significance, if also a note of paradox, is lent to Professor Wellek's effort by the fact that he must be almost the only scholar with pronounced historical interests and impressive historical knowledge to align himself with what is commonly called the "new criticism"—for Professor Crane and the Chicago school have deliberately renounced the alignment.

That Professor Wellek's adherence stops short of the rejection of history goes without saying; but inevitably his historicism is severely modified. It is compelled to substitute the absolute value judgments to which the "new criticism" is so strongly addicted for the tentative and "relative" appraisals natural to the historian: *relativism* is a term of severest reproach. The new "theory of literature" and of literary study insists not merely on concentration upon the work itself (who in his senses would wish to do otherwise?) but on the absolute autonomy of literary work and literary artist as such, with its attendant consequence of banning all extra-literary considerations and explanations; and this carries over in some degree to the treatment of criticism and works of criticism, though these, apparently, are not regarded under the terms and restrictions of literary art. Certainly, the "theory of literature" which he has adopted leads Professor Wellek to condemn out of hand every critic who collides with one of its favourite dogmas—for example, the whole group, representative of the main movement of criticism in eighteenth-century England, who approach the work of literature through its effect upon its audience. Such condemnation, it may be argued, does the history no harm so long as the fact itself is clearly recognized, and it is. But is this so certain? The ability of the historian to suspend judgment while he thinks himself into a position and seeks to view it from within has its value for understanding. And in the particular example cited there is a curious delayed reaction. In the chapters on Wordsworth and Coleridge, in the next volume, we find no adequate recognition that the persistence of this approach to poetry in juxtaposition with others of quite different kind is part of two efforts of synthesis, both characteristically English and each characteristic of its author—Wordsworth's in relation to his own experience as poet and man, Coleridge's in the interest of a rich, if never completed, metaphysical scheme, where art and all that might go to its production and reception would find, like every other significant human experience, their appointed place and justification.

It would be captious to complain of Professor Wellek's frequent and complacent references to the interests, discoveries and standards of his adopted school, or of the recurrence here, as in our undergraduate essays, of the magic name of Mr. Eliot, whose criticism, we are solemnly assured, has (to take a single instance) lent significance to Lessing's comment on Milton's non-visual imagination! For Professor Wellek, though an enthusiastic, is no docile disciple. He broadly hints that the school's disregard of history is partly explicable as ignorance, and can even label Eliot's conception of "tradition" as "unhistorical." Indeed, one motive of his present

effort would seem to be to teach his fellow workers something of the historical sources of their own doctrine and help them to a more adequate definition of their terms—to mediate, that is, between contemporary criticism and historical scholarship. Nor can it be denied that his sense of the present illuminates his account of the past in specific ways—and most notably in the emphasis which it allows him to throw on the emerging ideas of myth and metaphor and the differentiation of allegory and symbol.

One could not avoid—even if it were not repeatedly invited—some comparison of Professor Wellek's *History* with Saintsbury's yet more ambitious effort. The primary purpose of such surveys, whatever their special standpoint and emphasis, is to exhibit the movement—an earlier generation would have called it the progress—of critical theory and practice; and their principal utility is to inform the student of literature on those parts of the field with which his acquaintance is imperfect, and thus to aid him in placing in their larger context those critics of whose writings he has some command. It is not surprising that Professor Wellek's volumes pursue this purpose and possess this utility more fully and consistently than do Saintsbury's. Their area of coverage, though extensive, is more restricted, and Wellek's control of his material is more secure. Saintsbury was a pioneer, whose initial effort was one of self-education, while Wellek can draw on half a century of intense scholarly investigation, to which he himself has made some notable contributions here and elsewhere. Saintsbury had little concern with ideas as such; and despite the liveliest interest in the past, his notion of historical writing was rudimentary in the extreme. His *History* is in fact a series of impressionistic essays on past critics, presented chronologically, with summaries of the principal periods, which are also impressionistic, safely kennelled in inter-chapters. Given a congenial critic whom he has read with care, Saintsbury can be illuminating: as example one may take his chapter on Dr. Johnson, in every way superior to Wellek's laboured effort which commences with an untenable generalization and declines in a series of qualifications. The whole stupendous task is carried forward with characteristic gusto to the conclusion of what is surely the greatest of "Saintsbury's running—and leaping—commentaries." A phrase from Johnson supplies its fitting eulogy: "a gay and vigorous dissertation in which delight is mingled with instruction." No one would think of Professor Wellek's *History* in these terms. His are other merits, and they are sufficiently evident.

His conceptions of history and of criticism, whether one can wholly agree with them or not, are carefully thought out; his scholarship is rigorous, his documentation full. His method of exposition is eclectic, but its limitations are foreseen and accepted with deliberation. The history of criticism, he holds, is a branch of the history of culture, and "has its own inherent interest, even without relation to the history of the practice of writing" (which is intermittent and must often remain speculative), and as such Wellek proposes to treat it. Nor will he pursue the causes of change in literary criticism into the area of social and political thought and action (where the relations are yet more speculative). But "changes of intellectual climate, the history of ideas, and even definite philosophies, though they

may not have produced systematic aesthetics," stand in closer proximity and deserve examination. "The effects of Cartesian rationalism, Lockeian empiricism and Leibnizian idealism are imprinted on the criticism of the three leading nations, and seem to a large extent to account for the differences between French, English and German criticism" in the first eighty years of his period. "I have used in part," he tells us, "the method nowadays called 'history of ideas,' the tracing of key concepts . . . through diverse texts, but have chosen to combine this with more traditional methods of describing and evaluating the ideas of individual great writers," since "pure 'history of ideas,'" while facilitating the tracing of "dialectical sequences and shifts of meaning," can do nothing for a "synoptic understanding" of often loosely articulated "systems of individual theorists" or "the peculiar attitude and sensibility of the great critic."

The justice of this appraisal of methods is unquestionable; but actually the direct use made of "history of ideas" is less extensive than one might suppose. It is applied to good purpose in the first chapter, on "Neoclassicism and the New Trends of the Time," in which Wellek faces (as every historian must) the difficult problem in exposition of where to begin and how. (And nowhere does the *History* more shine in comparison with Saintsbury's than in its treatment of Neoclassicism and the relation of subsequent development thereto.) But in the remainder of the book the method is resorted to only intermittently even in dealing with minor figures. This is not to say, however, that the new discipline does not exercise its indirect influence and cast its light far and wide. It can do so because, despite his seeming preference for the solidity of the individual to the tenuity of the concept, Wellek's primary interest and main strength lie in that branch of the history of criticism which deals with the "theory of literature" and impinges upon the general history of aesthetic—a difficult relation which he treats on the whole with knowledge, firmness and tact. On the critic's evaluation (Saintsbury would have said, enjoyment, but the "new criticism" will have nothing to do with pleasure) of individual works, Wellek has little to say, and that little inevitably fragmented and referred back to underlying theory. The result is a formulation sufficiently coherent in terms of ideas; but rarely if ever are we given an opportunity of appraising the critic's sensibility by considering his total response to a masterpiece or the style (itself surely an index of sensibility) in which the response is recorded.

But let me not end on a note of reservation. Let me emphasize again the range and detail of Wellek's learning and, wherever I have been able to check it, the fullness and precision of his documentation. These are the qualities which give his book its value as conspectus and indeed as work of reference, and make it a permanent acquisition and something more than "History of Criticism for our Time."

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE

A History of Italian Literature

President Ernest Hatch Wilkins' *History of Italian Literature* is addressed to English-speaking people, including those who are not acquainted with the literature or the language. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press [Toronto: S. J. Reginald Saunders and Company Limited]. 1954. Pp. xii, 524. $9.75.) Questions debated by specialists are not discussed. Doubtful matters are called doubtful and left. This is an historical account of works and authors, of facts not theories. Nevertheless, as with all true histories, it is an expression of the historian's mind, the mind that has planned the book and made it.

The plan is as orderly and as carefully thought out as would be expected by anyone who knows the writer's other works. The literature is divided, not according to centuries or according to *genres*, but into twenty periods named after dominant characteristics, authors or patrons, or parts of centuries; 1640–1690 is a "Stagnant Period." The reasons for this kind of division have been thoroughly discussed in an article, "Periods in the History of Italian Literature," published in the *Romanic Review* for February 1954. A list of the "Periods" is given in the Appendix of this book, with the numbers of the chapters corresponding to them; the chapters, however, have appropriate names of their own, so that the system behind them is unobtrusive; an author and his various works are always treated together in the same chapter or chapters.

Since the end of the fifteenth century nearly every educated Italian has produced some kind of literature, and the historian has had to decide how many of which authors can be dealt with in less than five hundred pages, and how much space can be given to each without slighting any of those chosen. These difficult problems have been solved methodically with considered sacrifice and without meaningless lists. "Hosts of minor authors are disregarded," among them Angiolo Silvio Novaro whose "Che dice la pioggerellina . . . di marzo?" is the most delightful Spring lyric ever written. A list of "Additional Writers" who have been omitted "because of limitations of space," evidently with regret, is given in the Appendix; notable are Chiaro Davanzati, Lodovico Dolce, Benedetto Varchi, Gioberti, Ada Negri, Rovetta, Panzini, Palazzeschi, as well as Maltilde Serao, with whom Mr. Wilkins was personally acquainted.

At the beginning of each chapter that corresponds to the opening of a new period there are paragraphs noting contemporary historical events in Italy and other countries and contemporary developments in the other arts, including music; and "special attention is given to literary relations between Italy and English-speaking countries." These paragraphs are invaluable because they give to the reader the comfort of feeling at home in the period.

The Appendix contains a selective list of "English translations and books in English dealing with Italian literature." Noticeable omissions are Bickersteth's *Leopardi* and Hall's *Short History of Italian Literature*.

The historical narrative is clear, reliable and admirably contrived, but the permanent value of the book resides even more in the critical appreciative treatment of the works of the authors. This writer understands

and appreciates his authors, and his sympathetic interest in their works makes what he says interesting to all readers, those who already know something of the subject as well as the others. There is no perfunctory writing anywhere in the book. Because the previous writings of Wilkins have been chiefly concerned with the older literature it might be expected that the modern authors—especially minor modern authors—would be treated less carefully, but they are not; one example out of many is the page devoted to Ippolito Nievo.

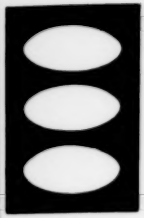
What does Wilkins do with Petrarch, the author whom he has made peculiarly his own by monumental published studies? He presents Petrarch as the whole man he was to himself and his contemporaries, a great scholar, a great humanist, a great patriot and orator, the author of extensive works in Latin, and also of exquisite Italian verse which he cherished fondly although he pretended to consider it unimportant. But the importance of the *Canzoniere* is well recognized here: of the twenty pages that deal with the life and character of the author and all his works, seven are reserved for the Italian verse.

The three chapters on Dante do not dip into the existing ocean of conjecture; there is no statement that is not unquestionably true. In his thoughtful exposition of the *Commedia* Wilkins is concerned with the meaning which the poet himself intended to convey to his many readers, not with other meanings which can be derived from the poem by learned or imaginative interpreters.

Throughout the book the many quotations are translated, most of them by Wilkins himself. This, of course, is a very useful feature of the work, but many of these translations, especially those in verse, have great beauty of their own. Those from Carducci are particularly admirable for sympathetic skill.

This history of literature has been, I think, about forty years in the making. The result is a lasting gift to the English-speaking world, well worth the time and labour spent on it.

J. E. SHAW



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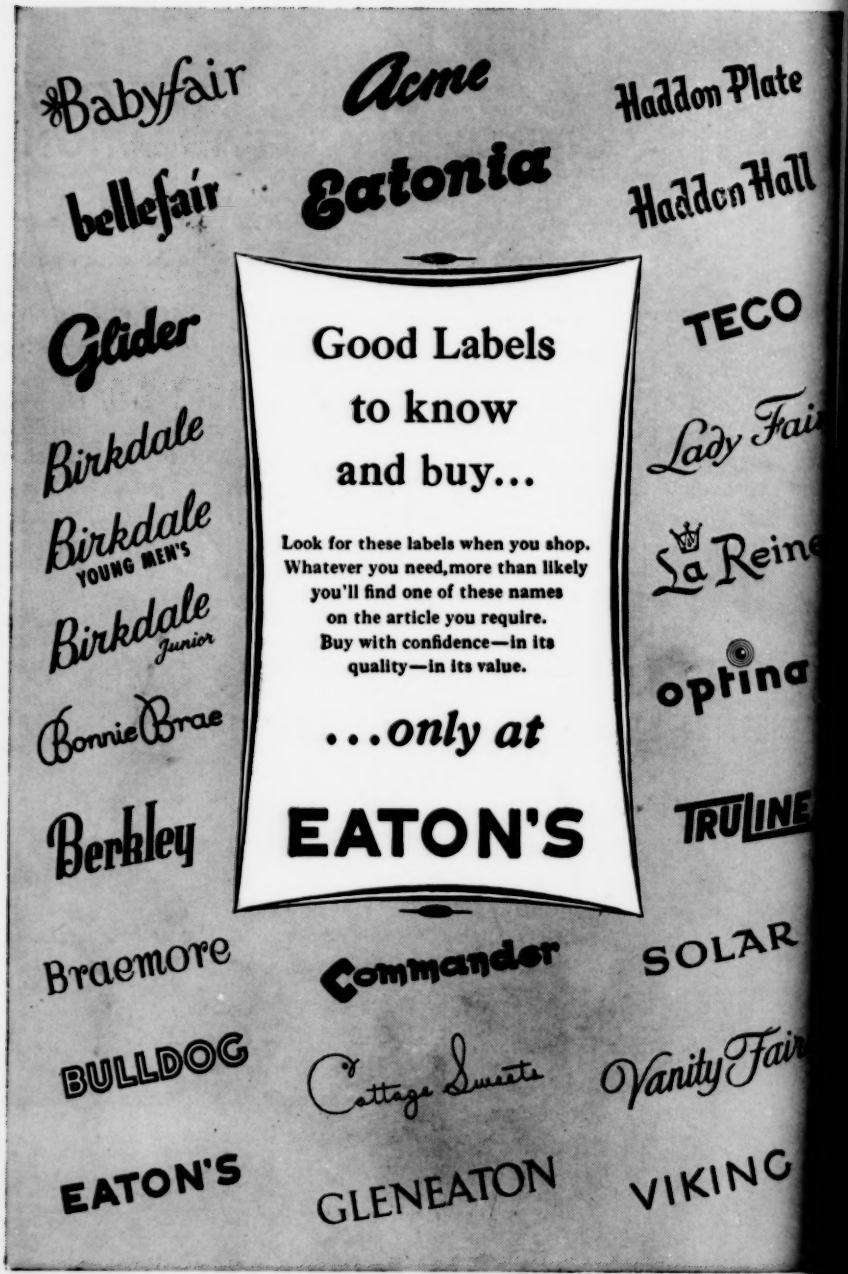
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